

Interview with Jewell Fenzi

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Foreign Service Spouse Series

JEWELL FENZI

Interviewed by: Mary Louise Weiss

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FENZI: We were to talk about our college years (for the ADS workshop), and I think that, really, as an undergraduate whatever I did had little bearing on my future except for meeting Guido, which I did my senior year at Berkeley. I got out photographs this morning, just to jog my memory since that was many, many years ago, and really we had quite an aimless time (as undergraduates). Guido had started as an engineer at Cal Tech, didn't like it, came to Berkeley, studied mathematics, really didn't see that he had any future there. I was dabbling in journalism and English literature.

Q: Roughly what years are these?

FENZI: I met Guido in 1949 at Berkeley, and then I graduated in 1950 and went to work for an advertising agency in San Francisco. Guido dropped out, became a coffee taster for Hills Bros. [coffee company], and we were married, and we had Ruthie by the time Guido took the Foreign Service exam. He passed it with 98% on his general knowledge. This was the old three day written exam. And of course this was during the [Sen. Joseph] McCarthy era and his communist hysteria which deeply affected the Department. There was no hiring, so Guido waited and waited and waited.

Q: Had he been informed of that?

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FENZI: I have no idea. But he waited for his oral exam during that time. When he passed the written exam he left Hills Brothers and went back to school, because he thought he should have a degree in either economics or political science. He took political theory with a minor in economics. When I think back on it, our parents must have been fit to be tied. (Parents provided financial aide to further the FS cause). He ran a freight elevator half time, took classes half time and studied in the evening. We lived in a large old Berkeley brown shingle house, in a big apartment converted from the main floor. Ruthie had been born in 1951 and Millo was born in 1954, and we had lots of graduate students with children around us, and we really had a very nice time. We didn't have a penny, and not many cares. Millo had been an Rh baby, which was more serious in those days, but fortunately being born in San Francisco before we went abroad, he had excellent care and was fine.

Q: This was still the post war [World War II] period?

FENZI: Yes, and we were really the precursors of the free speech movement and the counterculture; we wore blue jeans, sweatshirts and sandals and drove an old Model-A, and the children all played together [Chinese, Afghan, Afro-American]. I guess I really wasn't aware of it at the time, but what a great proving ground for the Foreign Service that was, because first an Afghan couple moved in downstairs, and he was...

Q: These were all students?

FENZI: These were all students. He was a graduate student in architecture and he was the first cousin of the king, and he was married. He was the only one of the Afghan students who was married, and he was the leader of the Afghan community, I think there were 16 Afghans at Berkeley at that point, plus Waly and his wife Jamila, whose last name I'm not sure I ever knew, they were just Waly and Jamila, and their two children, Walid and Hassina. Well, this was my first introduction to royalty. They knew very little about things

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practical! Waly didn't speak English well and he ultimately dropped out of Berkeley and went to school in Germany because German was his second language.

Jamila, on the other hand, was very quick, learned English. She and I would garden and grow herbs and lettuce, and she would say, "If my mother-in-law could see me digging in the soil, I would be ostracized." She had a wonderful time, she liked it, she adapted very quickly (was relieved to be away from purdah, and gave up Ramadan after just two days when she fainted while cooking dinner for her family).

Q: Was she the first foreign person you were that close to?

FENZI: No, because I had lived in Hawaii before, and I had been there with Japanese students, Chinese students, Hawaiian students, that was really my first introduction (to other cultures), but I really wasn't thinking about the Foreign Service in those days. That was just a jolly good time in Hawaii right after World War II. But, to return to the Afghans. Waly's income came from his house which, was either the French embassy or the residence for the French ambassador in Kabul, perhaps both, and a generous check would come the first of every month. Well, he was the leader of the community, so for ten days or so there would be champagne and wonderful food. Jamila made a marvelous chicken stuffed with rice and raisins and carrots and cardamom. I must say she did know how to cook, and there were wonderful feasts. Of course, half way through the month there wouldn't be any money and they would be living on potatoes. Jamila came to me one day when her refrigerator wasn't working—it was one of those old fashioned ones with the freezing unit suspended from above. Well, the ice was everywhere, cascading from the ice trays down to the bottom of the refrigerator. She had never defrosted it!

Q: Your job was cut out for you.

FENZI: This was really a fine introduction to how other people live, and realizing that you had to appreciate people as they were. When they left for Germany, sadly I saw her go, because she really had become a friend. The Chinese consul, Lin San Chien and his

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family, moved into the apartment next. Lin San had given his wife and daughters American names, Helen, the wife, and Janie and Annie.

Q: Were they Christian?

FENZI: They must have been Christian. Well, Helen Chien had never done anything in her life either except go to movies. Jamila was an interesting woman, (aware of the need to adapt to the culture surrounding her. But I used to wonder what became of Helen Chien.) I felt so sorry for her, she could not communicate with us (and made very little effort). When we would all be in the garden with our small children, Janie and Annie Chien played effortlessly with them, but Helen was simply left out. I guess that was my first exposure to the importance of learning the language.

Q: You had a small international community?

FENZI: We had a small international community. But Helen just really didn't adapt, and Lin San moved very soon to Chinatown in San Francisco. His children, he realized, were becoming Americanized by virtue of their schooling. So that was my introduction to the Foreign Service on a very practical level.

The opulent side was when we went to Santa Barbara for holidays (to Guido's home). Ambassador Louis Dreyfus had retired, I think in 1951, after being ambassador to Afghanistan and Iran, and knowing that Guido was waiting for his orals, invited us to lunch. Ambassador Dreyfus had gone to school with Guido's father, and they were great friends of Dorothy Fenzi, his mother. Well, we drove out to Montecito - it's right next to Santa Barbara - and drove through big stone pillars down an oak shaded drive to a huge stone mansion. A woman very properly attired in a black uniform...

Q: Had you been invited?

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FENZI: Oh, yes, we had been invited to lunch...uniform complete with white frilly apron opened the door and ushered us into a sea of Persian carpets, a sea of carpets, they were overlapping, they were everywhere (even in the small elevator and in the bathrooms). I was transformed into another world. They had also served in Sweden so there were Scandinavian porcelains, there were heavy silver frames with signed photographs of heads of state. And beautiful Persian miniatures.

Q: This was an American?

FENZI: Yes, American, retired in Santa Barbara after many, many years in the Service. Among other posts, they had served in Lima. We had lunch from sterling silver plates and goblets, and there was a huge sterling rimmed mirror and sterling centerpiec[probably, I decided many years later, from Camusso, the famous Peruvian silversmith]. And we were taken through the house afterwards which took more than an hour. There was a room with furniture carved in Spain, and at one point Grace Dreyfus said to me - she had a wonderful gravelly voice - "My dear, I did it all on Louis' salary." Well, very elegant lunch, very elegant afternoon, and as we were driving away from the house my mother-in-law, who was one of the world's rare individuals, said "Jewell, I hope you realize, and you must realize right now, that the reason Grace bought all of those things with Louis' salary is because they lived on their private income for all those years."

Q: There had to be an explanation.

FENZI: And that was it! She was a wonderful woman (Guido's mother) and very practical, and she had to tell me right then and there that this was not going to be my Foreign Service.

Q: Did it whet your appetite?

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FENZI: It was so beyond my expectations at that point that it was just like another world. I had the same reaction when I went to a dinner for the Kennedys (Ted and Joan) at the (king's) palace in Morocco. Well, this is another world and let's enjoy it while it's ours.

Q: Did you realize that it was the other extreme, perhaps?

FENZI: No, I didn't at that time. Well, then Guido came east - he had to fly east at his own expense to take his orals here in Washington, he passed his orals, passed his physical.

Q: Did he come on his own?

FENZI: Yes, yes.

Q: At his own expense?

FENZI: Yes.

Q: Did you come with him?

FENZI: No, I stayed with the children. And he passed both the orals and the physical, and as he was leaving his physical, Dr. Crane, who was apparently an old tyrant in MED, asked if there were anything else, and Guido mentioned his heart murmur, and Dr. Crane ultimately wouldn't pass him. So Guido came home and appealed, and had to go to Stanford University Hospital and have — it was the very early days of heart catheterizations — he had to have one of those, which indicated (incorrectly as he discovered some 30 years later) that his murmur was outside and not inside the heart. I think that's right. So MED decided it was an external thing and he passed his physical. We knew that only months later, in October of 1955.

Q: This was the medical aspect?

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FENZI: Medical aspect. So we waited and waited and waited, and nothing happened, Guido may have finally called Washington, I don't know, but in January 1956 Guido was just forming his committee for his Master's thesis, when he got a call to be in Washington in ten days.

Q: Were the children required to have a medical exam?

FENZI: Not at that point, nor was I. Anyway, in January of 1956 Guido got a phone call (from Washington), after waiting four years. Of course, this was the McCarthy era, and I guess he realized that he had to be patient.

Q: Did he realize that he was having a super check because of the period?

FENZI: We would really have to ask him. Probably so because someone did come around and ask our neighbors about us — we were all very Berkeley liberal at that point! So we came east and parted with our first pet. We had two gold fish, and one of the gold fish in all the confusion of packing and farewells committed suicide by jumping out of its bowl. Apparently fish do that.

Q: He had no future.

FENZI: He had no future. So we had only one goldfish to give away, but that was the beginning of the tearful departure of many pets until we felt that we could start shipping them around the world with us, which we eventually did. And we came east, and I think that I can honestly say that my own personal launching into the Foreign Service was absolutely dismal. We lived in a dreary brick building over in Arlington, with lots of people from backgrounds very different from ours. The rent was \$87.50 a month, but fortunately there was one other couple from Berkeley.

Q: Were these all Foreign Service?

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FENZI: No, he was an entomologist, Jerry Rosen, who went on to fame at the Museum of Natural History in New York. We used to read about him in The New Yorker, and kept track of them that way. He studied bees and came to Morocco while we were there and had dinner with us in Rabat some years later. In fact he called just a couple of months ago. Bobbie Rosen and I lived at opposite ends of this long, long, long soulless building, and we would meet and lament the fact that we were no longer in Berkeley. Then finally two other Foreign Service couples did move out there.

Q: What was happening to Guido?

FENZI: He was in IES - International Education Service, it later became CU. He had rushed back to Washington and, of course, there was nothing for him. There was no course, no A-100, there was nothing. He and another young officer, Paul Aylward, were the only two who came in that at that time. (Possibly Craig Baxter, too?). I forget where Paul went (in the Department), Guido went to IES to work on the Fulbright program, which had nothing to do with a Foreign Service career.

Q: Was he told that he would be here for a certain period before an assignment abroad?

FENZI: There again, we would have to ask Guido. I don't remember. He must have been. When they sent him to IES, he must have known it was for two years.

Q: What about yourself and other Foreign Service wives who had come to Washington with new FSO husbands? Were you given any kind of material to read, or training.

FENZI: Nothing, nothing.

Q: Was there a wives' workshop of any kind.

FENZI: Not that I could go to because I had the two little children. We did set up a baby-sitting cooperative so that we all sat for one another, and could go out without having any

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extra expense because our salary in those days was about \$5,000.00 a year, which was exactly twice what we were making in Berkeley and Guido and I both agreed that our quality of life was halved, absolutely halved. You simply could not live in any style on the salary.

Q: Cost of living was very high here.

FENZI: Well, it was just the different lifestyle. We had to buy a better, but still second-hand car, Guido had to have dress shirts and suits. We came to JSFOC meetings, and that's where we met and got to know people like David Peacock, Anne and Dick Long, and Paul and Judy Aylward. I can't remember all of them. Oh, Bob and Mary Anne White, a lot of people whose careers have come and gone, more gone than...

Q: How long were you here in Washington before you were assigned abroad?

FENZI: About two years. And, I did not like it. I did not like it at all. I was very happy to go overseas. Guido and I discussed first postings, and he asked for Australia so that at least we could stop in Berkeley and Santa Barbara en route!

Q: Did you have a preference yourself for an area?

FENZI: No, I really didn't. Guido was one of two people in a class he was taking at the time who didn't ask to go to Europe and we were sent to Rotterdam. And, there again, Guido was still a language probationer at that time. Looking back, I feel that if I had been Guido I would not have accepted the assignment. Now maybe I'm looking at that from today's perspective. You couldn't be promoted in those days if you were a language probationer. Guido had only studied Latin.

Q: Was he getting language at FSI?

FENZI: Yes, he was going to early morning language classes.

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Q: When he received his assignment?

FENZI: Yes, he had been studying French.

Q: What about yourself with regard to language?

FENZI: Nothing, nothing.

Q: Had you had any? Did you want to take any language study before you went abroad?

FENZI: Well, it didn't really matter because we didn't know where we were going, and I had studied French and Spanish, and I knew that I could pick up either of those if I needed it. Guido was interested in French, so he was sent to Rotterdam as a language probationer - he started studying Dutch when we got there, and he did take some French lessons, but he kept just missing on the exam.

Q: Before you left was there anything offered to you as a wife, in the way of protocol training, any type of workshop? Were you handed the "Social Usage in the Foreign Service"?

FENZI: No. My background again was Santa Barbara and the society I moved in as a bride. Well, really, we transformed ourselves when we went from our counter culture life in Berkeley, because that's what it was, except that we weren't on drugs and we were married, but it was a very casual disdain for the establishment. But we would go home to Santa Barbara and do an about face, and Christmas dinner was black tie at Guido's mother's home, and we would go to rather formal luncheons with her friends, and that was my training for the Foreign Service, my mother-in-law's home, really. And so Holland was just an extension of what I had learned there.

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And being a teenager in Hawaii with a lot of military input into our life, although my father was there with the Veteran's Administration. There was a great American military presence there. This was post War, 1946, 47.

But we got to Holland and we had a very fine two years. I got along very well with the Consul General, Robert Wilson, but I found his wife difficult. She was a foreign born spouse, and I realize in retrospect that she was uncertain and unsure of herself, even though she had gone to the United States as a child and had graduated from the University of Arizona and had two MAs! She was from Luxembourg, and she had brought along a Spanish maid and she spent most of her time at home with the maid. Also, she insisted on speaking German with the Dutch, who were just as comfortable in English as they were in any other language, and she insisted on speaking German to them, which infuriated them because of their wartime associations, which were still very vivid.

Q: It lingered a long, long time in most of those countries

FENZI: Her husband left the Foreign Service when he was only 50, in large part because she did not want to be second wife in the embassy in Costa Rica - he had been offered the DCM slot, and originally there was to be no ambassador for awhile, and she had agreed to go. But then refused to be a DCM wife. Ten years later she wrote a very nice letter to me saying how wrong she had been about many things in Rotterdam. Today, when we see her in Santa Barbara it is very sad because she has been incapacitated by a stroke, and at Christmas we learned that one of their adopted sons had died, in his early thirties.

But the flip side of this was that, as the spouse of a first tour junior officer, I had a pretty free reign. There was another spouse who had brought a New Zealand maid/companion with her, and she really didn't get out and about very much. We had four single women at the consulate, and an FSO who was divorcing his wife, and she left with their two daughters soon after we arrived. All of this is nothing new. Is it really, single officers, divorces, dissatisfied spouses...

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Anyway, with a full time maid and children in a French school most of the day, I had a lot of free time and I filled it in the traditional way. I was asked to be president of ANCOR, the American Netherlands (women's) Club of Rotterdam, and we established the American International School of Rotterdam that year. The school grew and thrived and is still taking care of the children from Rotterdam's international community. We had enormous support from the city, and I remember calling on the Burgermeester of Rotterdam in his very grand office to propose the school.

There are a number of things worth mentioning about Rotterdam. The first one is funny now, but it certainly wasn't at the time. We had been in a hotel for ten weeks with a four- and a seven-year-old, and we were finally moving into our house, a lovely little place in Overschie, a former village which is now a suburb of Rotterdam - Schielaan 9, Overschie - it was a while before I could pronounce our address. Our very first Consul General, Jeff Reveley, left a few weeks after we arrived. He was retiring and his lift van full of Foreign Service treasures was on the dock next to our attic leftovers, his waiting to be shipped and ours waiting to be taken to the house. Well, you can imagine what happened. United States Lines picked up our lift van and sent it to Boston. They were truly apologetic and rented beds, linens, cutlery, dishes - a sort of extended welcome kit - and we could move in, and they got our effects back to us in just three weeks. Which shows that it can be done.

Another thing I remember was a hat and gloves incident. Rotterdam is very close to The Hague, so we were frequently at embassy events, including the wives' meetings every month. Philip Young was ambassador, and apparently his wife was difficult, but I was so far removed from her that I was not truly affected. At one of the wives' meetings she announced that all of us should wear hats and gloves when we went into town. Well, I assumed that she was referring to The Hague, which is more formal than Rotterdam, the world's largest port and a working town. There is a saying in Holland, the money is made in Rotterdam, invested in Amsterdam and spent in The Hague.

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Anyway I gave no thought to the hat and gloves, and the next time there was an all-consulate meeting in Rotterdam, I bicycled in from our village, with skirt and hair flying, and arrived to find the two women - the CG's wife and the other spouse - properly attired in hat and gloves. She was apoplectic that I had not conformed to the ambassador's wife's demands, and it didn't make matters any better when her husband agreed with me. Robert Wilson was truly supportive - of both Guido and me - and that recognition was important to me at the time. He once remarked that he always saw the Fenzis at the various functions in Rotterdam, but never saw any of his other officers. He is still a friend and we see him in Santa Barbara, where he retired.

He was very supportive at the end of our two years in Rotterdam when Guido had a little career crisis - he still had not passed his language exam. So back to Washington we came, and Guido studied French until he passed the exam and I remember he had a promotion list all his own.

I'm trying to think of all the things we did there - we bought bicycles, two large ones and a small one, which the children took turns riding when we went touring on weekends. One child would ride behind either Guido or me for a while, then would cycle awhile on the little bike, and we saw a lot of the surrounding country that way. We usually ended up at a little 17th century coach stop in a village called Zwet, which was about half way to Delft from Overschie. And then the children would usually decide they were too tired to make the return trip, so Guido or I would cycle home and return with the station wagon to pick up everyone plus the bikes. Our Dutch neighbors thought we were a bit daft, to cycle when we had a car. They had had no choice but to cycle during the war, and cars were still very scarce in Holland at that time. If you did have one, you traveled around with big sheets of cardboard and covered the tires when the car was parked in the sun on outings.

We also bought a boat, with a tiny little outboard, and we would glide through the canals, setting the children ashore to run alongside on the canal paths when they became restless. It was fun seeing the city and the countryside from a new perspective, from the

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canals. I certainly wasn't aware of it at the time, but we were pretty much establishing a pattern and lifestyle which we took with us to each subsequent post.

For instance, we always tried to find our own house, and were willing to wait for months for the house we wanted. Our first house in Rotterdam was a charming little place, but Overschie was not a fashionable neighborhood, so we were well within our housing allowance. I think we were the only ones at post who were. The rent was \$60 per month, and we overlooked a pond with a weeping willow on the banks, fields of grazing cows, a windmill and the distant spires of Delft. We studied Dutch, but since all of the educated Dutch spoke English so well, it was difficult to get beyond the household and tradesman vocabulary.

We traveled throughout the country, which is easy to do in Holland, from the Afsluitdijk in the north - the big dike which enclosed the Zuider Zee and I remember reading about in my Weekly Reader in elementary school. We got to see the 1958 World's Fair in Brussels, and took the children up into the Atomium where they had free samples of beer. I think it has since been declared unsafe. We traveled in Germany, Luxembourg, Lichtenstein, took the children to Paris for New Year's and stayed at the H#tel Gare St. Lazare. Guido and I also had a wonderful trip by ourselves through France to see the ch#teaus on the Loire, and to see his Italian relatives in Florence. We left the children at a very, very nice summer camp in Noordwijk on the sea - many of our Dutch friends had spent part of their summers there as they were growing up - and our children still complain about it! Even in our time, our Dutch friends had two holidays in the summer, one with children and one without.

I developed my passion for markets in Rotterdam, and loved marketing at all of the stalls, and at the little shops around the Grote Markt, which was just a block from the consulate. There again, I was totally unaware that I was developing a portable interest, but as, Brillat-Savarin said, "Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are," and I just never found a better way to find out about each of the cultures we lived in.

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I should mention that the former occupant of our house in Overschie was a vice president of Dow Chemical and his family, and his wife had everything delivered to the house, from the butcher, the baker, the green grocer, the poultry man, etc., and for a few days I did the same. Until I discovered that the weight of the meat and the weight on the bill weren't quite the same, and that we were billed for fruits and vegetables which were never delivered. The poultry man, however, was honest, and he would give the children large slabs of young Gouda cheese from his delivery truck.

He delivered only once a week, and if I needed a chicken or turkey in the meantime, he would send it by post. The mail system was so efficient in Holland that I would get the poultry the same day. Once I ordered a turkey, and it came with a crushed breast bone, which looked as if it had been attacked with a hatchet. Which it perhaps had, for when I complained, the poultry man explained that he always broke the breast bone because otherwise the turkey wouldn't fit in the small ovens in Dutch stoves. One of the things I truly appreciated about our Foreign Service career was the domestic help we had for most of the 30 years, which liberated me from housework and gave me an opportunity to pursue other interests. In the early years, I felt that what a spouse did—her attitudes and activities—mattered.

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Continuation of interview - August 1, 1989Q: This is a follow-up interview, Jewell, to the one you've already done. I thought I'd ask some general questions, starting with your most satisfying or favorite post.

FENZI: That's really very hard to say, because each post had something different to offer. But I think all of us who were in Rabat 1965-69, including Frances and Ben Dixon, who were in Tangier at the time — Ben was consul general — agree that that was our favorite post. It had everything — a good climate, the beach, the Atlas mountains, a good American school in Tangier; we had French cheeses in the petit marché in Rabat, and

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we had marvelous vegetables and meats in the march# de Sal# across the river, which were very inexpensive. Six varieties of artichokes and enormous beautiful oranges. We had wonderful foods, and that was important after three years in West Africa. The children were only three hours away at the American School of Tangier, which we thought was a more than satisfactory school.

Q: Were you all in good health while you were there?

FENZI: Yes. However, we were in Ourzazzate, in the south on our way to Zagora, which is a pre-Sahara town, and Ruthie's chin began to swell and hurt. She was crying. So an Italian doctor — what he was doing in Ourzazzate I do not know, but he came in the middle of the night. He was a handsome man with golden eyes, and he thought Ruthie had an abscessed tooth, so he gave her some pain pills. The next morning her face had really begun to swell and we gave her another pain pill and started driving across the High Atlas to get her home. Guido drove, held her in the back seat with her head in my lap.

We didn't have enough pain pills. We got over the Atlas, came near Marrakesh, not entering the town, just kept on because Ruthie was in such pain. I drove at that point. I used to drive very fast anyway, but I have never driven faster. The roads were good in Morocco. The Peugeot would go 90, and we just flew.

Q: Did you have an American doctor?

FENZI: Yes. We were going to Kenitra, the air base, where there was a very good pediatrician, Dr. Lovejoy, who just happened to be doing his military service there; he went on to Children's Hospital in Boston. Fortunately he was on duty. We stopped in Rabat to phone ahead, because by now Ruthie's face was just ballooning. We just didn't know what had happened. We called him — we gave him about a half-hour's notice — and we absolutely flew to the hospital. He began x-raying Ruthie from head to toe. Apparently she had fallen in a skiing or skating accident in Switzerland a few years earlier and had fractured her chin bone. A cyst had formed there and was infected and the infection was

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just spreading right up her head. Dr. Lovejoy said we were lucky that we hadn't been in Zagora, another eight hours away...

Q: She was taken care of there?

FENZI: Yes. Immediately given IVs, and was taken care of there until the swelling pretty much subsided. Then we flew up to Wiesbaden, to Frankfurt, to the military hospital there. The oral surgeon managed to remove the cyst by working inside her mouth so that she has no scar. It was a very rare thing and she was written up in, I think, The New England Journal of Medicine. She was X-rayed during the ensuing months to show how the area was filling in. That was our worst fright ever with the children. Cammillo had malaria for 24 hours in Freetown. But — touch wood! — we were so lucky, I think, in all the places we lived.

Q: You mentioned the markets and being able to ski and travel with your children and having medical facilities and so on. Was there also a good mix of personalities in the Morocco situation?

FENZI: Yes, but many of them who were at the embassy have died. Earl Russell died on his way to Dakar when their car broke down in the desert. Dwight Dickinson was our DCM. After he retired Eleanor went on to a certain fame as an artist and had showings at galleries in New York. Temple Cole has died and Frank Hazard, our administrative officer. Janet and Wingate Lloyd were there. Betsy and George Lane; he went on to be Ambassador to Yemen. Walt Hayden, Ed Dow who recently died, Winnie Weislogel, Joe and Christine Cheevers. We just had a good mix of people.

Q: Were the women there congenial? Were there women's activities?

FENZI: We had a women's organization. However, my interest was the American School of Tangier. Instead of having a football team they had a drama society and they did a Greek tragedy every year. They had a splendid English teacher, Joe McPhillips, who I

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believe is still the headmaster, and all of the Moroccan students, having learned their lines from him, sounded like Joe McPhillips, who was southern. I used to sell the tickets and house the children and arrange for the theater when the play came to Rabat.

Q: Was this an international group?

FENZI: Yes, it was. It was mostly Moroccan children. I don't remember that there were British students. They send their children home to school. We had Moroccans, East Indians, Americans; I'd have to ask my daughter what the makeup of the school was but there were quite a few Moroccans, who were being educated in English.

Q: Were you more active at any one particular post on your own? That is, you were very active in that post with children in schools and so on. As your children got older, did you focus more on your own interests?

FENZI: Yes.

Q: You were more or less on your own, independent of a women's club, or — ?

FENZI: Yes, especially after the Directive.

Q: Was there much official entertaining on your part?

FENZI: Yes, a lot, a lot. Always as economic officer. In Freetown it was with the British. There were always people coming out from London and from the United States to Freetown in the 1960s. Guido also worked with Lebanese and the East Indians, they were very important factors in the economy in Freetown. One Lebanese merchant used to import food from Beirut. We at one time had a commercial plane that flew across Africa from Beirut to Freetown. It must have gone on to Lagos.

Q: Could you put in orders?

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FENZI: Oh, no. But Edmund Moukarsel brought in food and was very generous about asking us to dinner. So we'd have wonderful Lebanese dinners, and the women would be wearing their Parisian gowns because they shopped in Paris. They hate Freetown and they'd fly up to Paris — they all spoke French, of course — to buy their clothes; and the dinners would have been imported from Beirut. I can't remember if they had a Lebanese cook. They'd been there for years and years and years.

So that was a diversion. Also in Freetown there were Sierra Leonean Creoles who had been educated in England. So it was easy to associate with them — no language problem. A little harder in Morocco because there were very few Moroccan women of my generation who spoke English. It was absolutely obligatory to speak French. The ones who could speak English were so in demand that as a junior officer in the embassy, you had no hope of luring them to your parties. I taught English to a group of Moroccan bankers, and they would come to parties occasionally, but Guido was involved with the French bankers who seemed to entertain a lot.

Q: Had you taken the Teaching English as a Second Language course?

FENZI: No. I wonder if there was one in 1965.

Q: Did you have materials?

FENZI: Yes, because I taught the bankers at USIS. They weren't very interested in the course and I think USIS was happy to have someone take care of them. Our cook also took English lessons there. He was an interesting young boy. I think he was gay. He had been brought up principally by his sister, who worked for many years for a French-speaking family not far from our house. And Boussalem had spent a lot of time in the kitchen. He'd become quite a good cook at 20, he had a flair — my husband said he paid him to arrange lettuce leaves for four years — but our buffet tables were always attractive. He would take telephone messages when I was out, look in my engagement book and

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say, "No, Madame is not busy (she laughs) on such and such a day!" My family couldn't stand him, but he was a great help to me as a cook. He wasn't a very good housekeeper but-

Q: He was housekeeper-cook?

FENZI: Yes, he did everything.

Q: Did you have favorite servants in other posts?

FENZI: Oh, yes. Rose in Cura#ao. And not only was Rose our favorite. Dusty and Don Kreisberg who followed us in Cura#ao were devoted to Rose, who came to Washington and stayed with the Kreisbergs and with us for a little while after we moved into this house.

Q: And was she also a general factotum in the household?

FENZI: I didn't have her every day, because by that time in Cura#ao maids had gotten quite expensive. She came twice a week. The children were away at school. And we had a funny, funky little indoor-outdoor house that was always dusty. The riding stables were next door and Rose would close all the louvers to keep out dust, but that shut off the trade winds; and we had to have the trade winds. So when she left in the afternoon, she'd open all the louvers, and if we were having anyone over in the evening, I'd turn on the lights beforehand and brush away the riding stable dust from the pools of light under the lamps.

The house was absolutely open. One room had no wall at all. The living/dining room had open brickwork. Birds would fly in and build nests in the light fixtures and the cat would bring dead lizards in to the living room rug, the white one now in the downstairs living room. And the dog would bring dead things into the courtyard. The wasps built nests in the kitchen. Rose came twice a week and did her best. We also had a beach house. In one way, that was our most ideal post. We had two houses, two cars, two boats, two children who came home frequently from school, with their friends. Millo was at Deerfield and Ruth

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was at Bradford Junior College. We thought “we'll put them both in Massachusetts schools so they'll see each other.” (she laughs) They saw each other mainly in Cura#ao! We had an artificially low air fare, \$135 round trip from New York, if you can imagine, so they came home three times a year.

Q: Was there an allowance at that time for children who were in boarding school to come home once or twice a year?

FENZI: There must have been a once-a-year allowance. I think we always had once-a-year trips, but they came for Easter, Christmas and summer holidays.

Q: Which prompts me to ask you about holidays in some of these posts abroad. I notice that in Rotterdam, I believe it was, the Forest Service provided Christmas trees —

FENZI: That was in Freetown.

Q: But I think most Americans insist on trying to have a Christmas tree.

FENZI: Yes.

Q: Tell me about Christmas in various places. Were the children always with you?

FENZI: One year they didn't come to Freetown. That was absolutely the most dismal Christmas I've ever had. We had taken them up to Switzerland in November and stayed as long as we could with them there. We'd gone for a winter holiday but we also left them in school. We had been told there was no guarantee of a place for them in the British army school in Freetown that had principally Sierra Leonean children. In Switzerland they went to a junior school in a little chalet in Gstaad with a marvelous headmistress whose brother was the British UFO specialist and was written up in The New York Herald Tribune.

The school, Tournesol, no longer exists. The owner-directrice was Mme. Doris Muller, with her husband; the headmistress was British, Mrs. Trench. Wonderful woman; she

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and Ruthie corresponded until Mrs. Trench was in her 90s. Ruthie assumed she had died when she stopped hearing from her. The school had French mademoiselles and the children had to speak French at mealtimes. There were five or six other children from Freetown.

Q: Your children couldn't get to you on this particular Christmas?

FENZI: Well, we had just left them. We'd gone up on R&R. We wanted to go up as late as we could to keep them with us as long as possible but in time for the school not to be upset — wleft them in November. For two years, we saw them either once or twice a year. I can't believe that we did that. However, there were few British children in Freetown, they were all away at school; the local school was sadly lacking. Two American children who stayed behind in Freetown had personality problems; their mother wouldn't part with them and they were just little misfits at about seven and eight. Another little boy had only a chimpanzee for a playmate; they sent him away to school the following year.

Q: Did you have to use the Calvert System at any of your posts?

FENZI: I never did.

Q: But you had been in posts where you could either have your children at post in school or senthem away. Was that an international school in Freetown?

FENZI: It was a British Army school run for what few British children were there. They were children of the non-commissioned officers, because all the British officers' sons were sent away at seven to the proper schools in England. So Cammillo's playmates were little cockney children, and Cammillo started talking with (imitating that accent) and we decided maybe this wasn't such a good thing, even if he was only eight when he went away. But you see the two children always went together. They went to Tournesol together, to Tangier together although Ruthie did go to Tangier one year before Cammillo did.

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I think, not surprisingly, the greatest adaptation they had to make was when Cammillo went to Deerfield after we were transferred from Morocco, and Ruthie went to Bradford Junior College. They both adapted. But, I felt that I had done absolutely the wrong thing when I left them at those schools and went off to Cura#ao. In retrospect, I think that was probably easier for them than, say, Bethesda-Chevy Chase oa big impersonal American school would have been. I really think we did the right thing, but it didn't seem like it at the time.

Q: Do you think it might be because in a sense they were privileged in their own way, having the background they had and therefore they fit in?

FENZI: Absolutely, absolutely. Because they had been brought up in small schools, and they had been embassy children, and they had led a very privileged life. I think they were aware of that. Even as children they enjoyed the travels.

Q: During their secondary school years, they were not in U.S. public schools.

FENZI: Ruthie went to public schools for first, third and fourth grades; Cammillo first and second, that's all.

Q: I was thinking in terms of adapting to a very large suburban school on return, having been away for years. Do you think they were better off going into a boarding school although you felt reluctant about this, thinking you might have done the wrong thing?

FENZI: Academically, yes.

Q: ompared to putting them into public schools, which are immense.

FENZI: Yes. Academically, I think their education was the best we could have done.

Q: Socially?

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FENZI: Socially, they seem to have survived boarding school. That is a lot about schools!

Q: You had begun to say something about the Rotterdam women.

FENZI: Oh. When we established the American school there. Now, 30 years later, it is a thriving school. We had great support from the city of Rotterdam. I also had a very dynamic Dutch friend Henny Marie Blauwkuip, who took me to the Burgermeester and said: "We want to start an American school." We had to have 20 children, he said. "Then we will give you a building, we'll give you space." To shorten a long story, they supported us the entire way. We moved into a city-provided temporary building. From there we went to a very large facility because the school was expanding.

The Rotterdam city officials wanted a school in English for the international business community. There was a very small Alliance Fran#aise school but I don't think it even went through high school, it was just for the little children. The officials wanted a school to attract the business people to Rotterdam — most of the American and other business people were living in The Hague and the husbands commuted to Rotterdam. The city wanted an international school to attract families to Rotterdam. Now, the school is a thriving institution. When we went back to Rotterdam 15 years later, I realized what a valuable thing we had done.

Q: Still there.

FENZI: Oh, definitely.

Q: I wanted to ask you also about your role when your husband was principal officer in Recife.

FENZI: Exhausting. (she laughs heartily) Exhausting.

Q: Hard to cope with.

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FENZI: Well, there were only two Americans but there were over 20 people at the consulate. There was the USIS Brazilian white-collar staff and the consulate white-collar staff. And then we had a lot of support people. Guards, and gardeners, and carpenters. And a driver who was invaluable.

Q: Did you spend a lot of time handling the residence and your staff?

FENZI: A lot of time. There were days when nine people had access to the kitchen. So needless to say, I didn't spend very much time there. We had inherited from our predecessors a very good cook, Josefa, and a steward, Aluizio, who had been with the consulate and AID, on and off for 23 years. He just knew where everything was. He knew how to set a table and he arranged flowers and...

Q: Is this what you meant when you said you didn't spend much time in the kitchen because the staff was so capable?

FENZI: More willing than capable. (end of tape)

Josefa was a very good cook and was also the laundress, since there were only two of us. Then we had another position, house boy, which we didn't need so I worked the guards into that so they could have some additional income.

Q: Was this the first post where you had more servants.

FENZI: I guess three was the most we'd had before. Recife has a lot of rain, and when I arrived during the rainy season, the staff was eating lunch — their main meal which they had at the residence — standing up against the wall under the eaves of the house with the rain water splashing around their feet, because none of my predecessors had thought to have a shelter built for them. I immediately called the carpenter and had him build a shelter. We gave them our picnic table and benches which we weren't using and bought

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them a TV. I can't tell you how they appreciated that little bit of dignity. I also insisted that anyone from the consulate who was at the residence at lunch time was to be included.

Q: You mean drivers?

FENZI: Drivers, carpenters, the guards, the general factotum, Inacio, whoever. I said, "No onwatches the others eat." So there was always plenty for everyone. And there would always be enough left over for the guard who came in at night. So they ate well. That gave them more income for their own families. Sometimes they would not eat from the time they left the residence in the afternoon until they came back in the morning.

Q: Did other servants live in the house?

FENZI: No, no one lived in, but the guards were there all the time. And they took over the position that the houseboy had had. I spent a lot of time managing the residence. I had to keep books, at which I am terrible. Brazil was having rampant inflation so I was constantly recalculating expenses in dollars.

The original houseboy quit and that is an amusing story. I was missing money from my wallet. Two people had access to our bedroom suite, one being Manuel the houseboy and one the cook, Josefa, who was something of a bandit but I didn't think she would take money, I really didn't. And besides, it really wasn't very much. But when Guido and I were to go on a trip, I left a purse out with nothing in it except a note in a wallet addressed to "Manuel." Well, there was Manuel the houseboy and Manuel the guard. Now the latter, I didn't trust. He was a former policeman, and I was sure he prowled around in our bedroom suite from time to time. We'd seen the lights go out there once when we were approaching the house. He had heard the car and had come running downstairs to open the gate for us.

So I left the note, which read: "Manuel: If anything disappears from this purse ever again, you are going to disappear, too." I never saw the houseboy again. What I didn't know was

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that he and Manuel the guard, who were friends, were also great believers in candomblé, a Brazilian version of voodoo. And young Manuel the houseboy thought I was going to do away with him! I never saw him again. And Manuel the guard brought me a little stone — I don't know if it was carved or if he just found it naturally that way — a little voodoo fetish which he gave me. It was something that had been protecting him. Perhaps he should have kept it!

He happened to be on duty the day I did have a voodoo priestess come to the house because I had been in seven automobile incidents, some more serious than others. I hadn't always been driving. But we had accident after accident after accident. Guido and I had a serious one that could have been devastating. After being hit, our car came to a stop hanging over the edge of a canal that was an open, tidal sewer; the car that hit us flew right into it at high tide, while our car spun around and was hanging over the edge. His car sank into the filthy water but he got out. It was interesting: I'd never been in an accident like that before. Guido was trying to control the car. I had my thumbs on both seat belt releases, his and mine, because I knew what I wanted most to do was get out of the car if it was going into that horrible canal.

Q: You realized that all these accidents were “too much?”

FENZI: They were too much. By that time my cook was Julia. Josefa had a nervous breakdown. Her brother, who worked for one of the sugar plantations, had saved for years and years to buy a car, and perhaps two weeks later it was flattened by one of the cane trucks. Two or three of his friends in it were killed, left widows and a multitude of orphans. And Josefa simply went to pieces. So by this time I had Julia as the cook. I said to her, “Julia, all these accidents! I've been driving for years.” José, the driver, had never previously had an accident or even gotten a ticket. She simply said, “You need a voodoo priestess.” I said, “Well, send one over.”

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At the last minute I got Flora Pitts to come along — she was in Recife with us. Remember, she analyzed our oral history project tapes for us several years ago. I said, “Flora, come over, I’ve got a voodoo priestess coming.” Flora had been sick a lot. I knew that the priestess knew about me from Julia, but she didn’t know anything about Flora and she didn’t know that Flora would be there.

Q: What did you know about voodoo priestesses?

FENZI: Oh, I’d been to several ceremonies on the beach for Yemanja, goddess of the sea, and I had waded out and tossed flowers to her and watched men swim out with floral wreaths so far that they disappeared beyond the swells. Mine was a cultural curiosity. Plus I wanted to stop having automobile accidents. So the priestess came, Flora arrived two minutes before. Manuel the guard was on duty. The woman had forgotten to bring one important item — cologne, a candle, something — so we gave Manuel money and he went out to buy it. She had flowers floating in tumblers and she lit candles and passed them around the tumblers. And she doused Flora and me with horrible cheap cologne.

And then, all of a sudden, she went into a trance. Her face changed, her voice changed. I had to translate, English to Portuguese for the priestess; vice versa for FlorThe woman gave both of us Preto Velho — “Old Black” — a kindly saint, as our patron saint. Flora was to take herbal baths and drink herbal teas. She was working too hard; she should remember she was not at home in the US but was in the tropics. The woman pinpointed Flora’s situation exactly! Flora was trying to live as she had in Pittsburgh.

Q: Many Americans who go abroad try to live the same pace they do at home and try to —

FENZI: And you can’t do it in a place like Recife, and this woman picked it up immediately. Flora was immensely interested. Then the woman said, “Donna J#ia” — translation of jewel; the Brazilians had trouble with “Jewell” because they can’t pronounce the w — “Someone’s put an evil eye on you.” And I had already assumed that it was Josefa,

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because she was truly mentally disturbed at that point. But the woman said, “Donna J#ia, you are the stronger personality. You can win. All you have to do is rub yourself with this cologne.” She told Flora the same thing. “And then you light three candles before you go to bed at night”, I forget exactly what she had me do — “and you will be all right.” (pause) “Now that will be 50 cruzeiros.” (both laugh)

So we paid her more because we were so delighted with it all. After the woman left, Flora, being a psychologist, said, “That woman's marvelous. She and I are in the same business. She self-hypnotized excellently, she has psychology down pat.” I don't know if Flora ever did the herbal teas, she had a difficult time with health problems in Recife. I don't know if she ever took herbal baths or herbal teas; perhaps she did take things a bit easier.

But I lit candles on the balcony off of our bedroom, Guido grumbling every night. There were louvers which the light would shine through. At first I had them in the doorway where I could see them from our bed but that was too much for Guido. I just couldn't use that awful smelling cologne, but I never had another accident. One day Flora and I were driving together beneath some of the great mango trees that shade Recife's streets, and a mango fell and hit her car. (laughing) She said, “Jewell, I thought this was all over.” But it didn't even dent her car. I never had another accident and Flora felt better. She did eventually have a terrible thing, a protozoa was eating away her retina. She had to fly up to Boston where fortunately they caught it in time to save her sight, though a bit of her central vision is gone.

But we had a good time in Recife. There's something to be said, no matter how small it is, about running your own post. You do things the way you want to do them. We had the whole northeast, we couldn't even begin to cover it all, it's larger than New England, there were six states. Guido did get around to visit all six governors. I loved it, because invariably the governor would whisk Guido away in an official car, leaving Jos# and me to prowl around the marketplaces. And Jos# had been driver for so many years that he knew what to look for in each and every city. He was very interested in markets too, and

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would explain what one looked for in...what was a specialty in Fortaleza, in Macei# (cities in Brazil's northeast).

Q: You were lucky to have him.

FENZI: Oh, yes. That's how I did my Brazilian cookbook, really, and how I could do it regionally. And then we'd always try to go to local restaurants for at least one meal. I'd ask Jos# for names of dishes and an idea of the ingredients, then I would try to get the recipe from someone.

Q: Was this where your interest in writing the cookbook started?

FENZI: No. By then I had done one in Cura#ao. (The two cookbooks are included in the narrator's folder.) I also had belonged to a cooking club in Freetown and had a lot of Sierra Leonean recipes. Which was interesting because the African slaves were the cooks in early Brazil, and there was a similarity between African and Brazilian foods. Dishes had been greatly refined in Brazil, and had moved from there to Cura#ao with the Sephardic Jews. So there are similarities between the three cuisines which I found interesting.

Q: And also in the language and other things? Say, the word for "tea."

FENZI: Yes. Papiamentu in Cura#ao is based on Portuguese. I never studied Papiamentu because it just wasn't worthwhile, it wasn't necessary. It was only after I'd been to Brazil and had learned Portuguese and then returned to Cura#ao that I could understand Papiamentu. It was a lingua franca, for the blacks who were brought from Africa as slaves, and for the Dutch, the Spanish.

Q: Were you studying Portuguese at the time, while you were in Brazil?

FENZI: Oh, yes, started it here, and continued studying it while I was there. That was another nice thin— you know, it doesn't matter what size your mission is, there are a lot of "perks" that go with being principal officer. And a tutor, Dona Eva, came to the residence

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every morning and gave me lessons. Then I realized that Guido wasn't taking time for his lessons, so I went over to the consulate and we studied together. He was really ahead of me in comprehension. It's always been that way with every language we've studied. He's always been much better than I am at comprehension. I just want to communicate.

Q: You could use it in the markets when you traveled?

FENZI: Oh, yes. Very few people spoke English in the northeast of Brazil, very few. So I really needed it.

Q: When you did your cookbooks, were they done in English or in English and the local language?

FENZI: Well, for the Recife book I gathered the original materials in Portuguese, translated them into English, discussed them with my cook in Portuguese, wrote the recipes in English and then had them formally translated into Portuguese. The book was bilingual — basically so the American women could read recipes in English on one page, and their cooks could read in Portuguese on the facing page — virtually everybody had a cook in Brazil, and in Brasilia many of the cooks could read, and in São Paulo and Rio and Porto Alegre. It was basically in the northeast that they couldn't read.

Our butler's pantry was enormous, and had a huge conference table, it was just wonderful for spreading things out for big receptions. I moved my typewriter there to a corner of the huge table. And Josefa, being unable to read and write, couldn't understand why I had to know exactly what she put into a recipe; she couldn't comprehend measurements. When she lifted the lid of a pot, I'd shriek from the butler's pantry, "Josef[in Portuguese, first] What are you doing now?" "Oh, nothing." "Josefa, what are you doing now?" "Oh, [in Portuguese "a little of this"] — and so I'd rush in and shove a tablespoon or cup or something underneath the ingredient. She'd grumble and say, "Oh I cook by feel, why does anyone need all these spoons and things —" She couldn't understand why I needed exact measurements, because she would indeed cook "by feel", rubbing salt, spices and

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herbs through her fingers. Well, I do too, I always put salt in like this, you do have to feel the salt. So Josefa, Jos#, Aluizio, Manuel, Marcello, Morais, Paulinho, Inacio all helped with the book. I gave them all copies. Even though Josefa couldn't read hers, she liked the drawing of her grating coconut in the “quintal”, the service area off the kitchen.

We had a jambo tree in the quintal. The fruit is like a pear without much flavor, but it has a beautiful pink skin. They'd harvest the jambo, peel the fruit and I would have them save the skins; and boil them first so the fruit would look like a beautiful pink pear when poached. The dish was called doce de jambo. It was served with a cheese which tasted like a goat cheese but wasn't—queijo de coalho—made from cow's milk but I don't know what they'd done to it. We used to buy it in slabs upcountry. I got extremely interested in the food. That was my “identity thing”. (laughing).

I always maintained that you had to have your own identity. When I reread my letters from Freetown (My nice mother-in-law saved them all.), I found great concern in them for the children— their playmates, the language, the adaptation, the fear of disease and the water being boiled, losing their friends who left Freetown. The concerns were for the family — we were still in temporary quarters, our household goods hadn't arrived, the air freight had. (laughing) — my letters were all full of things like that.

Then when I got to Cura#ao and Millo was in Deerfield and Ruthie was at Brafdord, with that, plus the '72 directive, I found that my concerns were different. The local people had certain expectations of you as the wife of the economic officer, or the principal officer, and fortunately an interest in their cuisine was more than acceptable. The Cura#aolenos talked a lot about their dishes; the Brazilian women talked about their foods all the time.

So I began going to cocktail and dinner parties with a little note pad and began jotting down recipes. And then I would call friends and ask if I could come over and look at a recipe. They all had handwritten cookbooks. Handwritten cookbooks in this day and age! Both in Cura#ao and in Recife. Those were their principal cookbooks.

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Q: You changed all that.

FENZI: Well, not entirely. But perhaps to a certain extent. After the Cura#ao cookbook was published a local friend called, and I thought, (she groans) “Oh, something is wrong —” and she said, “I made your soursap Bavarian cream. It was MARVELOUS.” Well, it was an adaptation of a Cura#ao recipe, because I thought theirs was too sweet.

Q: You're aware that the Schlesinger Library has a collection of American cookbooks. Have you sent it?

FENZI: Yes. Joan Challinor asked me to send both books to them.

Q: I was fascinated with their interest in cookbooks written by American women abroad, as a part of their history.

FENZI: Because they are interested in what we do abroad. I'm a textbook example for them. (End of tape)

Q: We were talking about cookbooks. I thought that you had probably sent some of your cookbooks to the Schlesinger Library for their collection.

FENZI: Yes, I sent two of them, and I was delighted to do it. As we mentioned before we went to lunch, the Library is interested in what we did as Foreign Service wives abroad; what options were open to us, what was available to us. And I must say, I bristle to this day when people remark, “Oh well, she only wrote a cookbook.” Because the function the cookbook served for me was cultural, not being up to my elbows in flour. Maybe we just happened to be in societies where people are vitally interested in their food. But the Sierra Leoneans were, the Moroccans were, the Cura#aolenos were, the Brazilians in the northeast are absolutely addicted to their dishes. And it was a wonderful way to add meaning to the countless dinners, receptions, whatever we went to because you could be genuinely interested in their cuisine, and they responded to your sincerity. It was a very,

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very easy, natural cross-cultural link and it was also something that an American embassy or consulate wife could do that was not looked askance upon by the local people. In other words, it fit more or less into their expectations of what you should do and could do.

Each recipe in the Brazilian book is preceded by just a tiny sociological note, nothing very profound, because finances were a consideration: I only had so much space, and I could only do so many pages for the amount I was willing to invest in a publishing venture that could have all kinds of risk. So the sociological and cultural text that isn't recipes is very limited but nonetheless there. The governor's wife, Anna Marie Maciel, was very interested in promoting the northeast culture and its cuisine, "the old Brazil" as it used to be.

Q: The cuisine there is quite different than in other —

FENZI: It's the cuisine developed in part by the Dahomeyan cooks when they were brought from Africa as slaves. It's called Afro-Brazilian, and it developed in Bahia and of course spread in the northeast. Have you ever read a Jorge Amado novel? He always goes into detail about the Afro-Brazilian cuisine. As it spreads from Bahia, it takes on different guises and there are variations. But nonetheless a nordestino or nordestina is very interested in his or her food. And I was very fortunate that the governor's wife was. When I told her I was going to publish a cookbook she offered to give the literary launching at the palace.

The guest list was 350. I sold more books that one day than I ever sold at one time again, (laughing) but the price to pay for that was...in Brazil, whenever someone arrives — here I'm speaking of the educated classes — when you come into an event, an affair, almost regardless of what it is, you kiss on both cheeks, and when you leave you kiss on both cheeks. So on that day, I forget how many, (she laughs) all 350 didn't come, but I really was kissed about 800 time(hearty laughter from both). Two hundred women coming in and kissing you twice, and 200 women going out and kissing you twice! I had the most awful

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mouth infection for days after (trailing off in laughter). Well, I got rid of it; it was one of the prices to pay.

But in writing the book — there's an institute for sociological studies in Recife called the Joaquim Nabuco Institute, and a very famous sociologist, Gilberto Freyre, who taught I believe at Stanford at one time, was the first sociologist in Brazil, 50 or 60 years ago, to point out that yes, the blacks did have some input in Brazilian culture. I discussed the book with him. While we were there we celebrated Gilberto Freyre's 80th birthday. I also consulted a very famous sociologist, Dr. Soto Maior — in fear and trembling. Dr. Soto Maior had a number of articles in the local paper to the effect that, “A housewife or dona de casa, no longer cooks like she used to cook!” Understandably, because it meant hours of chopping, stirring, cutting, shelling, and marketing and everything else. I disagreed with him — I felt that people were keeping up the tradition but they were amending dishes when possible, because the cook just didn't have time to do all that any more. These days the cook very often is the only domestic, and has other tasks. I must say Dr. Soto Maior took it in stride, and even gave me a recipe.

For the launching at the Palace, we took my collection of earthenware pots, wooden kitchen tools and things that I'd collected all over the northeast on our trips into the interior — where villages had only recently gotten paved roads and the principal means of transportation was horseback or ox cart. I would buy clay pots and wooden spoons and things for 50 cents or a few dollars — all of these things were current cooking ware, the northeast equivalent of Revere ware! We took a load of those primitive artifacts to the Palace for a display at the launching, and the staff at the residence thought I had absolutely flipped!

As the very social ladies entered the big, ornate reception room, there were the pots, and wooden things, dried herbs. The driver came along and took care of the money. One of the guards asked if he could go along so he could stand behind the driver and watch over the money. Then Aluizio, the steward, wanted to go so he could talk about having been

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at the Palace. So I asked Anna Marie: "Do you mind if I bring these three? They will serve a purpose." She said, "Oh, not at all." Well, they were delighted. They got all dressed up, and the driver drove us in the consulate car, after we'd toiled all morning hauling around plants and pots and over a hundred books.

Q: This was your entrance into another aspect of your social life, it was not the official —

FENZI: No, the launching wasn't the entrance, really, it was the end result. I had been seeing the women at teas and I had been working as a volunteer at the Palace. Oh, that's another thing.

Q: When you went into the interior to buy these pots, did you explain why you were interested?

FENZI: No, because I was just buying them from the man in the street, or in a corner of the market. No. It was just fun bargaining and acquiring a unique collection of northeast cooking utensils.

Q: How many books have you published in different places?

FENZI: Just two, and then my colleague and I published a little booklet on the harbor in Curaçao. And that led to another commission to write about dry-docking and we did a book on that for the Curaçao Dry-dock Company. And that led to one of our most interesting assignments — to explain petroleum refining to schoolchildren. My colleague Helen Sargent and I were given an office at the Shell refinery. An engineer was assigned to us. We had hard hats. We'd already done the cookbook by then, and the harbor book, and we really were launched as a team in Curaçao. This would have been 1972, after the Directive. We were hired by Maduro's bank to do their brochure. We had a lot of varied commissions.

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And then the Shell opportunity came along. Well, her ex-husband really got the contract but gave it to us because he knew we could do it. Helen is beautiful, and Helen was divorced. She could drive me wild at times, but she's one of the world's delightful people. Mr. Tunis, the engineer assigned to us, fell head over heels in love with Helen. And Mr. Tunis was a very thin, gray little Dutchman, in rimmed glasses. And he stuttered. He stuttered anyway but when he became enamored of Helen, he could hardly express himself. So Helen and I learned refining from Mr. Tunis, and when he got to the c-c-c-cat-catalytic c-c-c-cracker, (both laughing) well, we just could hardly keep a straight face. We had a wonderful time, and could never, for years after — she was just here a couple of months ago being terminated from the Peace Corps — and we started laughing about c-c-c-catalytic cracker!

Mr. Tunis would come running into our office, “G-g-g-get your hard hats, we've g-g-g-got a s-s-s-sulphur leak.” So we'd clap our hard hats on and race out and sniff along pipes. (she breaks up, laughing; then explaining) Sulphur is one of the by-products. There was a lovely big yellow sulphur heap, but it smelled awful.

I wrote and Helen illustrated a book explaining oil refining and how Shell was keeping the pollution down to a minimum. Well, what was minimizing pollution was not Shell at all, it was the trade winds because they had the great good sense to put the refinery downwind from Willemstad, the capital, so the pollution was blown off into the ocean and Shell really wasn't doing an awful lot. But anyway that little book was translated into Spanish for Venezuela and in Papiamento so school children would know that really Shell could be polluting more than they really were.

I notice in my letters, rereading them and looking at my engagement books this past weekend, that the longer we stayed in Curaçao, the fewer were the bridge games and afternoons with the ladies. I was script writing for the advertising agency, or Helen and I would have a contract. Had a wonderful time! They are our closest Foreign Service friends. Helen is an American but Rudy was a white Antillean with dual citizenship. Rudy

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and his companion, Jacqueline, were here a few of months ago too. Guido, Ruth and Millo and I spent more Christmases with them than we have with our families during our Foreign Service years.

Q: You were abroad when the 1972 directive took effect.

FENZI: We were in Cura#ao. Just as everyone remembers where they were when President Kennedy was assassinated. I can remember Guido handing me the pink airgram. I was at my desk. I look at it and I thought, "This is great but will it work?" Even at that point I guess I realized that a lot would remain unchanged if you were going to continue to be a team.

Q: As big a responsibility.

FENZI: Yes. If you were going to be a team and help your husband, you were going to keep on giving dinner parties and —

Q: Especially when your husband got a senior grade.

FENZI: Well, Guido was a mid-level officer there; it was more the economic position. He was second in command in the consulate and dealt with the businessmen, who really are more important than the politicians 90% of the time. And I realized the directive would benefit me but it wasn't going to change my life an awful lot. And it really didn't. I kept on giving dinner parties. But it did enable me to have my own identity.

I had been working for the advertising agency very quietly, with the Consul General's permission, since 1971, but I was to maintain a low profile. I wasn't to spend a lot of time in the office, I was only to go in to pick up my assignment. And fortunately two of the people that I worked with at the agency were close neighbors. I could confer with them in the suburbs and maintain a very low profile. The consul general had reluctantly agreed to that arrangement before the directive.

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Also, the cookbook which Helen and I were publishing about that time was considered “women's work,” so that was all right, too. The amazing thing about the cookbook when it came out was — the first printing was only 6,000 copies and they sold in a few months because all the Antilleans bought them too. That's been my “mad money” ever since.

Q: Did the '72 directive affect you in relation to your husband's work? That is, your role as his wife entertaining —

FENZI: No. I kept on. There again, I checked my engagement books over the weekend, I kept on giving parties and entertaining the now faceless names I find in my engagement books from that era.

Q: Did you look on it as a responsibility that you wanted to keep? You wanted to retain it as a responsibility?

FENZI: I don't think I thought of it in those terms. Guido and I have always been a team, made a team effort; and there would be no change there. Because much of it what I did for the Foreign Service I did primarily for him.

Q: Did you discuss the directive with Guido at all?

FENZI: I don't think so.

Q: Did other consulate wives have much to say about it?

FENZI: I'm trying to think how many wives we had there. The directive primarily affected the wives in senior positions who no longer could ask for help. It didn't have the same impact on the younger wives, the traditional younger wives who were there at the consulate, and there were two or three at the time. However, I met one of those wives in the House of Fine Fabrics [a Washington store] several years ago. She is totally professional now that her children are grown.

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When the directive came out, made one very, very fancy sandwich, one little fancy open-face sandwich, nestled it down in a see-through box that someone had given me, tied a gold ribbon around it, and took it up to consul general. I jokingly said, "I've made you one last sandwich!", thinking that he would find it terribly amusing. He was furious! That little sandwich was a threat to him, which I didn't realize at the time. He didn't think it was funny at all. He saw his support system crumbling. He was there at post without his wife, she would not come; The CG, Harry Lofton, was off the wall. He was a proteg# of Strom Thurmond and Mendel Rivers and he was trying to make Cura#ao the Republican watering hole of the Caribbean. I had absolutely no admiration for him.

Q: He needed you. Had you always made him sandwiches?

FENZI: I had always helped him before and I think I continued to help him after that. But there was a gradual leveling off, and he then began going with a cosmetics salesgirl at the local equivalent of K-Mart. So she took over as the mistress of Roosevelt House. She would clip bougainvillea from the vines around the residence and stuff it in milk bottles, and that would be the flowers as you entered Roosevelt House.

Q: Then the officials still felt they needed the equivalent of a spouse's help.

FENZI: (with emphasis) Of course they did. Yes: not only did they feel it, they did need it. I think the '72 directive really affected the older women. Now, maybe people five years older than I, maybe —

Q: That's my impression, that they are ones who really bore the burdens—

FENZI: Who'd paid their due —

Q: Yes. And they had to do the entertaining, and needed more than just a household staff.

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FENZI: Yes. And also, there were the expectations, and suddenly their support system was gone.

Q: Have you spoken with anybody who was in one of those positions at post, who's either having problems or working it out with?

FENZI: Let's see. The last person I interviewed [for the Spouse Oral History] had been DCM and charg# in Maputo and she seemed to go along — she realized she had a role to play, but I think I can safely say that she did it unwillingly.

Q: But didn't feel she could ask junior wives for support?

FENZI: I don't remember asking her about that. I guess I just assumed she hadn't. When Judy Motley came to Brasilia she was truly a breath of fresh air. Shtook one look at what was expected of her and said, (in breathless voice) "I have to give a Fourth of July reception for 1,000 people? You all are going to have to help me." And of course she was nice —

Q: What year was this?

FENZI: About ten years after the directive. And they did help, because they liked her. And I think what happened to women of our generation, maybe a few years older, was that some of them didn't learn that they had to cultivate their American staff just as assiduously as they cultivated their host country contacts. Also they were afraid to ask for help, and as a result a lot of expertise was never passed along to younger spouses. I don't know about political wives. Were they even told about the directive, that they weren't permitted to —

Q: They have their own orientation at the briefing center.

FENZI: So I would think that had been discussed. Well, I wanted to say that the directive benefited me personally.

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Q: You already had something going there.

FENZI: Yes.

Q: And you were used to the life style, so it wasn't an abrupt —

FENZI: It was no abrupt change for me at all. I kept on giving my husband's dinners just like I always had, but I had never had any spouse assistance before. So my whole entertaining style was geared toward what I was capable of doing with our modest domestic help. I did ask Naomi Mathews, when I interviewed her, what she had done as an ambassador's spouse. She replied, "We just did what we felt we could do on our own, without being —

Q: But it needs a husband's understanding.

FENZI: It surely does; yes. So the one thing the '72 directive did was to give me a new freedom to go to the famous synagogue, one of the oldest in the Western hemisphere, and write an article on it for the Holiday Publications. It gave me freedom to write about how Cura#ao liqueur is made. It gave me freedom to travel to the other end of the island and do an article on the restaurant overlooking the bluff where the little boys dived 50 or 60 feet into beautiful clear water for coins. (End of tape)

...Holiday Publications gave me an entr# to Holland Herald, which is in Amsterdam actually. But as soon as we arrived in Rotterdam, I started writing for Holland Herald, the leading English-language magazine in the Netherlands. KLM inserts 20 or 30 of their own pages and uses it as an in-flight magazine. So, soon after arriving in Holland, I was getting bylines in Holland Herald.

Just beyond our marvelous old house on the dike was a wooden shoe factory. We lived in a village called Krimpen aan de Lek. In front of the factory was a huge wooden shoe. I hired a photographer, and we filled the shoe with little children and the photograph was

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included in the article. The village was off the usual tourist track, but the month the article was published, tourists began descending from the bus with their Holland Heralds looking for the wooden shoe. Another month I wrote about the restaurant just across the river, the Lek, and tourists again arrived with their copies of Holland Herald, and the owner was so pleased that he invited Guido and me to dinner. We still had to buy our wooden shoes though!

I think one of the reasons I really enjoyed the Foreign Service so much is because I had a lot of personal freedom after 1972 and I didn't spend years and years "doing the right thing." I just couldn't play that game. Yet the first time I read one of Guido's efficiency reports which made no mention of me, I felt like I had died. I was simply no longer there, and there was nothing in place to give me any recognition.

Q: Did you feel suddenly that the Foreign Service had lost something?

FENZI: Oh, of course, of course!

Q: Did you ever feel one way or another about salaries for senior-level Foreign Service wives, because of the work they do?

FENZI: Yes, I think they should have some form of compensation because they are, as a rule, excluded from the spouse jobs in the mission. I think the solution is — and we may have to limit this to wives who have representational responsibility — to have a job description for a "Foreign Service wife", to give the job some stature, and hire her to do the traditional work of diplomacy.

Q: Well but "representational", I think, is what you're saying.

FENZI: — Yes and no — Working as a CLO with the admin officer in Port of Spain, I learned more about how a mission functions than I did in all my previous 28 years.

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Q: Were you one of the earliest CLOs?

FENZI: No, this was '83-'85. I think I was in fact the third CLO.

Q: Tell me what you did.

FENZI: Basically, I was part of the Admin Section. One thing I did was cable the new family coming to post, or I wrote a letter, or telephoned. Anyway, I made some form of contact. I telephoned one junior officer to ask what he had done about his household effects. And he said, "I don't have any." He literally came down with a hifi system, a couple of suitcases, and a couple of footlockers with of books; that was it.

Then I made sure that the welcome kits were pretty substantial and complete. Trinidad at that time was the post in the western hemisphere with the highest cost of living. Everything was two to five times more than in the United States. So no one even wanted to buy a can opener or a bottle opener. There was no PX there, we lived on the local economy, we got a cost-of-living allowance, and we got the consumables allowance. That was another thing — when we were assigned to Trinidad, Guido came home one day and said, "We can take a ton of food to post with us." (laughing) So we went to our friendly Giant [supermarket]— and did research on how much things weighed. I had never paid any attention to that sort of thing before.

Q: Did you have the cooperation of the store's operating manager? That happened to me.

FENZI: Yes. The Giant had cases of things for us —

Q: Once you'd diminished that supply when you were there, did you order anything in from abroad?

FENZI: Well, you see, we could take the consumables to post in two increments — 1,000 pounds with us, then another 1,000 pounds just before the first year was up. We came

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home — life was crazy there, in a way — it was so expensive on Trinidad. Before our year was up, Guido and I came home to Washington, went to the Giant and bought the second 1,000 pounds of food and shipped it down. That wasn't even home leave — I left the island 17 times in the two years I was there. More than once it occurred to me that when we retired there wasn't going to be an awful lot of difference in our disposable income because there wouldn't be all the trips.

Other than birding and carnival, there wasn't a lot to do on the island. We swam primarily in pools, the highway to the nearest beach was a peril because of the wild drivers who had been drinking all weekend. Videos of movies pirated from Miami TV stations were the one inexpensive pastime, so I caught up on all of the movies I had missed over the years. The films frequently had news breaks — completely outdated, of course — but it was rather comforting to have them flash on the screen. I would watch four or six films a week, a thought which horrifies me today. Cura#ao had been a much more satisfactory Caribbean post.

Q: Did you have R&R from Trinidad?

FENZI: I don't remember, trips were so numerous. I went to two CLO conferences in Mexico City. As CLO, I sometimes went out to the airport with the Admin Officer to meet new arrivals if there was a spouse involved. They had strict quarantine there for animals, there was an awful lot of paperwork to do if anyone brought pets; because Trinidad has the equivalent of the British quarantine. I'd go with the admin officer to look at houses or apartments when we wererenting them. I found a wonderful old house for the Marines, within walking distance of the embassy.

Q: Was this because the embassy staff was expanding and there hadn't been housing previously for the Marines?

FENZI: Yes, there hadn't been a Marine contingent before, but what was actually happening to staff housing was that the GSO, quite rightly, suggested strongly to the

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Admin Officer that he stop putting single people in houses scattered all over Trinidad, but put them together in a new apartment building with a tennis court and swimming pool. And they were much happier there.

Q: Besides housing concerns, did you get involved with schooling?

FENZI: Oh, yes, I was liaison with the local schools. I was liaison with the American Women's Club. Carnival was a big thing in Trinidad, so I arranged Carnival activities for the staff, and the big Christmas party. We did a lot with the local staff, with the FSNs, they were included in a lot of things. Language was no barrier, and some of the senior FSNs were making more than the junior FSOs, because embassy salaries on Trinidad had to be commensurate with the local salaries. So as a CLO I did very much what I did as a volunteer spouse for years and years and years.

Q: It was a full time job?

FENZI: It was five days a week but only half day. But I was there most of the day, because there wasn't much else to do until it was time to swim at 4:30. So I'd go to the embassy and catch up on paperwork in the afternoon, because people tended to come by your office more in the morning than the afternoon.

Q: Did you have any unusual things to cope with, like an evacuation or...?

FENZI: No, no. We had demonstrations outside the embassy when we invaded Grenada. One day we had the anti-U.S. demonstrations and the next day we had the pro-U.S. demonstrations, but the police kept them across the street. The only person who died during our tour was the ambassador but he wasn't at post when he died, he was home, in St. Croix.

One woman was an alcoholic. Her husband was a masterful bureaucrat and managed to cover for her, even to the extent of bringing her back to post when the DCM thought he

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had blocked her return unless she went through a substance abuse course at the State Department. She'd work for a while on the switchboard, she was the best switchboard operator we had. She and her husband would have huge domestic brawls and the Trinidadian police would have to come. Her husband was reputedly having an affair with one of the secretaries, I mean, it was a mess.

Q: Did you have any training before you became a CLO that dealt with things like this? Listing skills...?

FENZI: No, I had no training at FLO. The previous CLO, when I came in the office sai(in breezy tone) "Well, it's all yours!" And when I called her about something, she would say, "Jewell, I'm not doing that job any more, it's yours now." She never gave me guidelines, nothing.

Q: Is there training now?

FENZI: I don't know. I developed my own CLO handbook. It was the only thing I had. They did develop one later on.

Q: Were you recruited before you went to post?

FENZI: Not exactly. The admin officer sent a cable asking if I wanted to be a file clerk in the visa office or take the switchboard job. I drew myself up to full height and marched into the FLO office and said, "Send them a cable saying that neither job fits my interest or my qualifications. The only thing I want is the CLO job."

Q: You kind of asked for it.

FENZI: You might say! When we arrived the CLO, who was a psychologist, or psychiatrist, had a Ph.D. I think, had just gotten permission to work in the local economy in her field. And the CLO job was waiting for me. I just walked into it.

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Q: Did it live up to your expectations? Did you have any expectations of what it would be?

FENZI: Yes. I really didn't know what I was getting into because I had had no training, as I've just said. And at that point — it's coming back to me now — there was no CLO handbook. They did develop one while I was there, and they did have the two conferences in Mexico City. The first one was of great value. CLOs really benefited from talking with their counterpart from a post of the same size.

Q: This was a regional conference of the Caribbean area?

FENZI: Yes. And the other thing we proposed was that future conferences be here in Washington. (laughing) So I learned, recently, that they did have one of the CLO conferences here. It's nice for the FLO director to go hither and yon, but it's awfully nice for the CLO to be able to come home.

Q: Did you feel the CLO position in your post was indispensable?

FENZI: I really did. Any number of young wives would come in, in tears.

Q: When they would not go to an administrative officer.

FENZI: Yes, because they could talk to another woman. Oh, and another function of the CLO was to be very frank with the regional medical people when they came there.

Q: Was there an understanding that you would confer with them on...?

FENZI: If I remember correctly, the administrative officer asked me to; yes, I'm sure he did. When Marlene Eagleburger's compensation proposal appeared in The Washington Post, I was interested in the reaction of some of the young spouses and organized a meeting of both officers and spouses.

Q: Tell me what the cable was about.

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FENZI: This wasn't a cable, it was a Washington Post article that Marlene Eagleburger, had written about compensation for spouses. And one absolutely furious junior wife came into my office and said, "I want to respond to this. I'll be damned if I want anybody to get a salary if I'm not going to get a salary, too." So I said, "Look, let's get everybody together, I'll get the husbands together too, and we'll draft a joint cable. You can send your letter too but we'll draft a joint cable and we'll get the opinion of the majority of the people." Fifty-five percent of the embassy — both men and women, couples. We drafted a cable for FLO which said, "We think that spouse compensation is in the future, but there should be compensation for all spouses. But first we want bilateral work agreements; we want AID to make more contract positions available; we want spouses to have tax credits; we want the officers to be hired as a couple — both people to be looked over, both to be hired, not just one. I forget now what all the points were.

Q: Did the women also ask for authorization, a credential in effect, if they would receive a salary, compensation for work, employment at post? Were they also requiring some kind of authorization for that as part of their credential to be put on a r#sum#?

FENZI: Like asking the Ambassador, or DCM to write a —?

Q: Yes.

FENZI: No. Because I think by that time it had been proved that that was not really particularly effective for a job search in Washington. No, that didn't come up. I think that I've covered most of the points.

We sent the cable up to FLO and Ginny Taylor responded. She was the FLO deputy at the time and she was delighted with the cable. Shortly afterwards I ran into Ginny at OBC and she told me that at one point, apparently, Marlene Eagleburger was going to the Hill saying she had unanimous approval of the Foreign Service wives on compensation. Ginny said to

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Marlene, "Well, Marlene, what about the cable from Trinidad?" And Marlene Eagleburger said, "Oh — THAT!" This is, of course, secondhand.

Then Marilyn Holmes sent a cable from Lisbon, I believe. Not negative, but like ours, suggesting alternatives. And then CLO sent out the Foreign Service Associate proposal. I gathered everybody together again. They sent back practically the same kind of cable.

Q: Asking for extended opportunity for employment at the post.

FENZI: Yes. And it was virtually the same response to the Eagleburger one. And then a cable went worldwide from FLO, written by Anne Heard, who was employment counselor at the time, which was — well, I can only compare it to something that might have been written by a sorority sophomore (Weiss laughs). She virtually neglected to mention that there had been opposition to the Foreign Service Associate proposal.

Q: I wonder if there might have been other letters, other dissents from other posts.

FENZI: Of course there were. One valuable thing I learned at the second Mexico City conference was that the CLO there had gotten the same response from her group that I had. That the Foreign Service Associate proposal as put forth didn't meet the essential requirements. However, part of it was adapted when the Department hired the spouses in Moscow and some of the other Iron Curtain countries. The Department took aspects of the FSA proposal which met the needs of the Service, and incorporated them. But the FSA proposal was never mentioned, they called it something else. Then, I tried to help with — it wasn't a bilateral agreement — but it was an arrangement to let spouses work in Trinidad on a case-by-case basis. As soon as that seemed to be underway, the DCM let it be known that he would take over with the Foreign Office.

Q: I was going to ask you if any women came to you seeking help in finding local employment.

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FENZI: Oh, not necessarily in asking for help. But one spouse was just so at sea without her own identity. She had her Master's degree in marketing. She finally did get a job there. That was a different case, too. Her daughter got involved in drugs while her mother was in Trinidad, and the daughter was here. The daughter left her father and was living with someone and her mother, quite rightly, was just fit to be tied, and came home and got that all settled.

Q: She came to you about this problem?

FENZI: She discussed it with me to a point but I had left when the crisis came.

Q: One is kind of a social worker.

FENZI: You are, yes. And I hadn't had any training at all in that area.

Q: Do you know if there's training now for CLOs?

FENZI: There must be. They developed the CLO Handbook while I was there, so I know they had that and I'm sure they've improved on it. I think perhaps the FLO Office is more effective now, with Maryann Minutillo as director, than it was in my day. It's just my impression from reading - the FLO Quarterly.

Q: Jewell, I wanted to ask if you'd tell me how you got interested in the oral history project. What tempted you to start the Foreign Service Spouse Oral History Project?

FENZI: Well, a very nice friend, Pamela Burdick, got me started. She wanted to write a book and was interviewing some of the people she'd served with in Nepal. I said that I would help her but that I wanted to start with very close friends, who I thought would be very sympathetic with my lack of interviewing techniques. So I interviewed Frances Dixon who was just the nicest person I knew in the Foreign Service, who would be very

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understanding of my initial attempt at interviewing. I asked her who I should interview next, and she recommended Naomi Mathews and Penne Laingen.

But to back up a bit, Pamela and I had been introduced to Don Ritchie, the Associate Historian at the U.S. Senate and also a president of the national Oral History Association — an avid, avid oral historian, besides being a very, very nice person. Pamela and I had Don Ritchie and some others to dinner. Pamela played some of her tapes, then I played my interview with Penne, about her activities during the 444 days that Bruce was held hostage in Iran. I was in Recife during the hostage crisis, reading the international edition of the Herald-Tribune, and although there was news of the hostages, there wasn't anything about the families.

Q: You had your yellow ribbons, didn't you?

FENZI: Yes, we had yellow ribbons on a shrub in front of the consulate. I interviewed Penne about that, and I played that portion of the tape for Don that evening. He was immensely interested, and I knew that we were on to something much more valuable than the fluff novel Pamela had in mind. But Pamela wasn't interested in developing archives.

Q: What was your intention at that point? Was it to be interviewing these women?

FENZI: Yes, it was just to interview, to get their experiences on tape. Shortly after that I interviewed Naomi Mathews. Everything was volunteer at that point, and I didn't know how to transcribe, I didn't know how a transcript should be edited, et cetera, it took me a long time to get Naomi's first two interviews back to her. But we did it — Joleen [Schweitzer] helped—anpresented them to her at the benefit tea in 1987. And, as you know, a few months later Naomi gave us our first substantial grant, which really put the Project in another sphere.

Now I'm getting a bit ahead of the story. After interviewing Naomi and Penne I happened to be talking to Lois Turco, who was then editor of the AAFSW News, and she mentioned

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that Hope Meyers had had the same kind of project in mind for years. I called Hope. We attempted to establish a group of advisors, older women who, it turned out were good interview subjects but were no longer “doers.”

Q: Was this in order to sort of establish how you would proceed, or what your end goal was?

FENZI: No, it had more to do with the substance of the interviews — what would they be willing to talk to us about? Now, all of the women we had to the luncheon at DACOR in December 1986 did agree to be interviewed, except Rose Fales. We have interviews with Peggy Beam. Naomi was invited to the lunch but couldn't come. We interviewed Leila Wilson, Elfie Elbrick, (pause) now I can't recall who was at that original luncheon —

Q: But these were women who obviously were interested in what you were doing.

FENZI: Well, they were. They were all very kind about giving interviews. But none of them was truly interested in being an adviser. They had done their “Foreign Service thing” by that time. So then, really it took us a long while to get direction, because we kept getting interesting facts, interesting stories, amusing stories. Hope interviewed women who'd been in China, like Jane Johnson. She interviewed Dorothy Emmerson who'd served in Japan. These were all older women, because we started with them for actuarial reasons, and also because we thought those were the most valuable memories. Joan Challinor was our adviser from ADS at that point. She had done her thesis on Louisa Adams, who of course was a very early Foreign Service wife. But Joan was really more history-oriented than oral-history-oriented — a professional historian. So we really weren't getting any true input from oral historians.

Then you and Hope and I went to the OHMAR — Oral History of Mid-Atlantic Region — conference at Woodbridge. The person who became valuable to me at this time was Gene Bovis at ADS. I would talk to Gene about the substance of the interviews. During one of those sessions he said, “You know, you really have to look way back to the rise

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of individualism and the theories of Hobbes and Locke, and..." This was very scholarly, advice but it was that conversation with him that made me realize we were conducting a sociological study with the interviews. We were documenting the change in the role of the spouse from World War I to the present. And then you and Margaret and I compiled the "Where is Your Place in Foreign Service History" time line.

Q: An historical calendar.

FENZI: Yes. That session gave the Project its form. Until then, we didn't know what kind of interviews to look for. I think that probably gave us our direction more than anything else.

Q: My original question was intended, I think, to find out what really inspired you to this. Had you thought of all the things these women had done? Anything of that sort?

FENZI: Yes. Pamela and I had been reliving our time in Sierra Leone, laughing over our experiences in Freetown. We had such good tales, there had to be other people with the same kind of life. But Pamela wanted to interview her colleagues in Nepal and do a book. So she called me and said, "Come up and talk to me about it." And I said, "I will do ANYTHING!" We had just moved into our house and I had plaster dust in my hair and paint on my elbows and broken nails from steelwooling floors. She approached me at just the right time, before I became involved in other volunteer deeds.

And I'd lost my 30-year collection of recipes which were to have become my retirement cookbook, "How Diplomats Dine." I still haven't found them. I know they were in the house, they may have been thrown away with the packing materials.

Q: When she reflected that the two of you had been recounting your experiences in Freetown, did she say or was possibly thinking, "These would be good on tape, these are so good...?"

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FENZI: I don't remember her mentioning that in connection with just the two of us. But we had such good times together there. One afternoon she and I were absolutely livid with the DCM's wife, which was nothing unusual. I seem to have a history of encounters with impossible foreign born spouses. Pamela has a very cunning, wicked streak. And she said (imitating conspiratorial tone), "Why don't we give a party for everybody we hate?" (both laughing) So we had a wonderful time compiling the list — we started with the DCM and his wife, and we got so hysterical wondering if they'd realize what we've done?" Well, it was just an exercise to ventilate, but it led to a party that became the talk of Freetown our entire tour there. I think we invited everybody we knew. We had saved empty wine bottles. It was to be a Shipwreck Party. We had saved brown bags — all the things you had to save in the tropics — and we wrote invitations on pieces of brown paper, stuck them in the bottles, and took them around Freetown.

You can imagine what happened. The servants took the bottle(breaking up). So we just put out a blanket invitation, which you could do in Freetown in those days, to the expatriate community and the African government officials, that they were invited to a party at the CARE beach house on a full moon night. And we had hundreds of people. We barbecued four lambs, we had a bathtub full of lettuce, we'd hired an orchestra that played until two in the morning — the triangle and the drums, the very, very simple African orchestra; and when they took a break — well, I think they were incapable of playing any longer because they had drunk so much — then some of the ministers (politicians) started playing. And all the village people came around, and the full moon was shining, and there were hundreds of us wearing "what we had on when the ship went down."

Q: Casual.

FENZI: Well, that's just a little aside. So I was quite willing to along with Pamela, at first, until Don's interest in Penne's tape. And then I realized that we had something more important than the expos# of an impossible political ambassador that Pamela had in mind. Don Ritchie sent us to Vic Wolfe and Stu Kennedy. They didn't have any money so they

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sent me to Dick Parker, and I didn't think he was terribly interested. But ten days later he called and had \$500 for us from the ambassador to Norway. And then he sent me to Diego Asencio who was then head of the Cox Foundation, who had no interest in the project. Later we applied to Cox, and they still wouldn't give us a penny, even though we qualified — to explain the Foreign Service to the American public. Well, where else did we look for money?

Q: We looked into the National Endowment for the Humanities.

FENZI: Oh, yes. We sent a preliminary proposal. We never really applied there, we just sent them a preliminary proposal. They said we needed to be more focused. When Mrs. [Marvin] Patterson came to our first tea, in 1987, she said she would have a check for us, but not right then. I learned later from Joan Challinor that Mrs. Patterson was setting up the Marpat Foundation.

Q: Had she taken an interest at that tea? Was that after she'd been interviewed?

FENZI: She became interested at the tea. Remember the cards we asked women to leave with us if they were willing to be interviewed. She must have filled out one of those, because I had an interview with her not long afterwards. I talked to her about her entrance into the service in Berlin, when she gave up broadcasting with Edward R. Murrow and William L. Shirer to marry Jefferson Patterson. And how her broadcasting career ended. The State Department wouldn't give her clearance to write any more.

Q: So she felt she had something to say about that, in relation to the Foreign Service and women's sacrifices.

FENZI: Yes; she did. And also, Loy Henderson had asked her to do a time study and she documented every hour of her day as spouse of the ambassador to Uruguay. She's a very organized woman. And of course that fits in very nicely with the time study that Margaret [Sullivan] did about 20 years later, after the '72 directive, because there isn't a

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great deal of difference between what an ambassador's wife did in the mid-70s and what Mrs. Patterson did 20 years earlier.

The Project just moved along. We got the Smithsonian guidelines and we're very grateful to Penne for trying to edit them so that they applied specifically to the Project and for compiling a manual for us. Some of it is no longer valid but it's still basically a good document to give to someone who may be interested in joining us. And then all of the administrative forms — the bio data form, the topic sheet, the expense sheet, the interview check sheet, these are all things that I gradually worked out. Those developed as we went along. I must say, we developed only one that we're not using. I did an "interview cost profile" and then I found it was a waste of time. Our expense sheet gave us all the information we needed. I don't use our "statement of purpose" any more when I contact someone, I use the article that Helen Fouch[#] did [in AAFSW News], because I think it's more valuable to have something in print.

Of course, the big help is having Caroline Farquhar, Marian Henderson and Martha Schley and Chris Hanrahan as transcribers. That's made the world of difference. I keep telling Carolin(laughing) that she's made "more difference in my life than anyone since Guido." She's just marvelous.

Q: Do you feel that now things have come to the point where there's more professionalism in the project itself?

FENZI: Oh, definitely. And of course we have to thank Mrs. Patterson [for the Marpat grant]. We have the absolute luxury now of being able to devote ourselves to interviewing, to developing the archives. I had no idea how expensive it was going to be to get the binders, the folders, the extra tapes, page covers — hundreds and hundreds of dollars to place these collections in the archives. We began developing the archives seriously when we knew the Marpat grant was in our future.

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Also, incorporating and having our 501(c)(3) will make us more professional. From now on, we will have to function within certain bylaws. They're very flexible — we can amend them, add to them, take away from them, and work on the bylaws as we progress. We're not locked into them. But we are locked into our articles of incorporation. And we now have to have a board of directors, and as I think I mentioned to you yesterday, I hope everyone will agree to Mrs. Patterson, Mrs. Mathews, Joan Challinor, an ADS rep and an AAFSW representative to be honorary board members.

Then too we need titles. We each must have a title, e.g., a director, a secretary, an alternate treasurer — I use the latter title because Guido insists on keeping our books, to keep me out of jail! We need an interview coordinator, which Margaret [Sullivan] has been doing; and we need our own liaison with ADS and the Lauinger Library to get materials to Georgetown U. And as I envision it, we can all earn a small salary doing interviews, doing administrative support. I was going to suggest that Joan Williamson be asked to join the board [as Treasurer] and to do administrative assistance. She is recently divorced and would welcome additional income. We will each have volunteer responsibilities, and we each have a chance to earn (she laughs) a little bit of money! Which I think is very exciting.

Q: After two years!

FENZI: Well, after two years, and after all the volunteer hours we've put into the Foreign Service, too. There are several other places that we might look for funding, which I'll not mention here because they might not work out, but I think we can look for more funding. I gave Mrs. Patterson a three-year budget.

We must also look for funding somewhere for the manuscript, because I think you'll recall that we did say that no funding from Marpat would go for the manuscript. So I think we have to look for more funding there. It's interesting to work on so many levels. There's the administrative level, the interview level, the method, or developing a format. Of course the fascinating part is the substance of the interviews, talking with the women. And I feel

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that just now, we have the funding, we have the forms, we have the system, we have enough people interested. We've recently enticed Joan Williamson to join us. The younger women are interested in helping with the administrative support work. Which I think can be made available to anyone who wants to come on Mondays from 9 to 3. Caroline is here then, there are two computers, someone can work on a computer, someone can xerox, someone can work on preparing the files for the Lauinger Library and take the transcripts over to ADS — there are all sorts of things we can do which I think people should be paid for because they're purely administrative support which the program needs to move forward.

Q: Within the three-year limit for the Marpat Fund, how many interview transcripts do you see as a goal at that point?

FENZI: I think the budget that Guido worked out for 60 interviews was \$54,000. This morning I bought a CD with the funds that we'll use from July to December 1990,— there was no point in leaving that money in the checking account, so we'll make several hundred dollars interest on that. I don't have our money in an interest-bearing checking account because we have a corporate account and it's cheaper just to leave it right there: it doesn't cost anything per month and though we don't receive interest we incur no expense, and we write so few checks — some months I don't write even one, usually they're written at the end of each quarter when I ask everyone to submit an expense sheet.

Guido estimates that for \$54,000 we could do about 60 interviews. So, if there are six of us, and we each do 10 interviews over two years, that's very leisurely and I think we can do it. I don't think we're striving for any goals that we can't reach.

I do think that the next thing we must do is expand upon that interview universe that we just touched on minutes before our last meeting closed, at Margaret's. I think we have to work from there. We also have our interview list that we developed at that meeting

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and we'll have to see how many of those volunteers have interviewed, how many have contacted the people on their list.

Q: Are you referring to expanding- (end of tape)

...that we have developed for a total goal to include younger women in the mid-level group and even new Foreign Service spouses coming in? In other words, to get a broader age range, because we did start with the older women.

FENZI: I think we have to if we're going to do an analysis of the change for a book, for a manuscript. I do feel that there is a lot of information in the 1985 Report on the Role of the Spouse that will make it unnecessary for us to interview as many contemporary spouses. If we were doing a really scholarly, in-depth sociological study, yes, we could interview 300 people. I've talked to enough people now — Willa Baum, for instance, the author of the famous handbook on interviewing and an authority on oral history for 25 years, when it was a fairly new discipline — and she said the best thing we can do — and Marc Pachter said the same thing — that the best we can hope to do is a representative group of women. We can't do a thorough study, we can't do a sociological study, I mean we'd need too much time, younger people, more money, degrees — who's going to look at it if we did it? None of us has a Ph.D. in sociology or history or anything else. I think we should interview the older women, do the bulk of our interviews with them, and then move up to 1972; we definitely have to talk to people on the cusp of the 72 directive.

Q: Now, aren't you speaking of the changes in the role of women in the Foreign Service that have taken place over the years?

FENZI: Yes.

Q: And are continuing to take place? This is the basis of our collection.

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FENZI: Yes. So we have to interview “modern” women but we don't have to interview as many, because you see some of the things that are affecting them are documented monthly in the FLO quarterly, “FLO Update” I think it's called. Things are being documented. I don't know when “Update” began, maybe ten years ago, but we could put that source in our file and someone would have a written document of spouse issues from then to now. So a lot of what we're talking about that affects current spouses is being documented. You also have a lot of CLO cables, CLO reports and such that I presume one could retrieve through the Freedom of Information [Act]. But a lot is being documented daily by CLOs, by FLO, by OBC.

Q: We want to get the personal effects of those changes.

FENZI: Yes. But I don't think we need to interview quite as many young people as older people, because I really believe that women like Mrs. [Elizabeth] White and Fanny Chipman will generate the greatest interest. Those women have never been documented before. Nor have we, until now. (Weiss agrees) So we'll just have to see. We're moving down in age now — if you remember the list that we compiled at Margaret's, most of the women are in their 60s, whereas most of those whom we've interviewed to date are in their 70s; some in their 80s, a few in their 90s. Some in their 30s, of course.

Q: You've mentioned AAFSW a few times. I wanted to ask you whether you felt that AAFSW was valuable to you when you were in the Foreign Service.

FENZI: Yes. I always was a member, no matter where I was, because I wanted the newsletter: to keep me in touch with what was happening in Washington. Also, there were occasions when I could take something that AAFSW had done and adapt it at post if you were involved in a Women's Club or something. One thing I hadn't really realized until we started working on this project — it was something else that Gene Bovis mentioned — is that being at a post, we really can be very isolated and out of the mainstream for a long time. Doing, as we did, going from post to post to post for 14 years.

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Q: I thought it was obligatory now to have home leave?

FENZI: Well, you come on home leave but you don't move into your house, you're not "living" here.

Q: Many women I've known have not felt that membership in AAFSW was at all necessary, especially when they were overseas because, they said, it only reports what's going on in Washington "and I'm not in Washington." But the newsletter has changed.

FENZI: Yes. But Washington, let's face it, is where the action is. And I always just wanted to know what's going on here. Besides, it used to be \$2 or \$3 a year and I could afford it — (she laughs) what is it now, \$15? But, when I did return to Washington in 1976, I wasn't interested in the Association, because I'd been abroad so long that I wanted to do something in the local community. So I got involved with the Volunteer Clearing House and the Dupont Circle Citizens' Association.

And also, when we moved her[current residence on 16th Street] and were revitalizing the neighborhood, I wasn't willing to take an entry level job. If I couldn't move right i(she laughs heartily) to a management position, I wasn't interested. So, after I had fruitlessly looked for a job, Guido said, "Well, what you really should do is join the Dupont Circle Citizens Association and get busy in the neighborhood. Get the abandoned cars off the street, get the parks cleaned up." And that's exactly what I did, and of course — well, real estate was soaring anyway but I think all that helped the cause.

Q: And that's very satisfying.

FENZI: Yes. It was satisfying, and I was contributing to the overall aspect of the city, and preserving our investment.

Q: Weren't you also active at the National Women's Democratic Club?

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FENZI: I bowed out of that temporarily. When my eyes were so bad, and I didn't know the women very well, I couldn't recognize anybody. So I just stopped going. I've been back a couple of times, now, and I think if I got involved in anything it would be the pro-choice issue.

But I wanted to get the Marpat grant settled, I wanted to get the oral history program administratively on course, which I think it is now. And I think we're really ready to deal with the substance of the interviews. I've always hesitated to recruit new people while we were arguin(laughing) about this form and that form. Who wanted to come and listen to that? But now that we can discuss interviews — who we're going to interview, why we're going to interview them, what you discovered in such-and-such an interview; because I think from now on we'll be dealing basically with the substance of the interview. Which is the part we're all interested in anyway.

Q: You sound as though you're quite satisfied with the way things have gone with the project.

FENZI: Well, I think so. The only thing we have to still figure out is if people should be paid more for research and editing. That's the one place we can save money, but it's very time-consuming.

Q: The pre-interview and the post-interview are very time-consuming.

FENZI: But now, with the \$200 honorarium, at \$16 an hour, that's 13 hours. I think we can get through most interviews in 13 hours. I think so. And if we can't, if it takes 15 or 20 hours, I'm counting on people doing that on a volunteer basis; but I think in 13 hours we can do it. Having everything in the computer makes a big difference too. Dealing with younger women. Suzanne Swanson is transcribing her interviews. Sallie Lewis is editing hers. Kristie Miller is indexing hers. From now on, assessing where people's skills are and asking them to help — younger people and those who are familiar with writing or editing

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— ask them to help, because they'll get very involved in their own transcript, I believe. And I think they'll be willing to help. I find it very hard to listen to tapes and index them. If it's a three-hour tape, it takes you three hours to index it. It's a review. So I try to do it when I return home from an interview; I don't always get it done.

Q: As you review and index and listen to the tape and put the final transcript together and see that there's a more or less a career lifetime between two pages for the archives, does it give you time to reflect on the Foreign Service as a career for women either as professional career person or as spouse?

FENZI: I realize that with the 1972 directive, a spouse really has an opportunity to work on an awful lot of levels. I think that in spite of the 72 directive, most women are willing to do the necessary representation because of their relationship with their spouse. I think the most important thing is your relationship with your spouse.

Q: Have you found in most interviews that that is a good relationship, that many of them, I find, referred to the "team effort," the "team experience," "team support."

FENZI: Oh, yes. This was the older women, the more experienced women.

Q: I wonder if it's the same now.

FENZI: Well, that's one thing that we'll find out. The youngest woman who I interviewed is of course one of a tandem couple. They had a commitment as a tandem just as you and I did as dependents, and I think the commitment is there, but perhaps it's different now? I don't know.

Q: I think that's a cooperative team, a commitment, or decision.

FENZI: And it is different. But speaking of tandems, and this includes singles, the one thing the Department could do is adjust housing to today's requirements. We are putting an awful lot of people in representational houses who are not using them for that purpose.

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And I suppose that represents only a drop in the budget bucket, but if that little drop could be channeled into salaries to make Foreign Service spouses employees, I think we'd be way ahead. Give the spouse an option; let her decide if she wants to be a spouse and have a salary, or would she prefer to be an independent individual with no responsibility to the post. I think that if a Foreign Service spouse were given a job description, if she were given a definite job at post, if she had an evaluation of her own performance, if she had a salary, then some of them would willingly do the traditional work of diplomacy.

Q: That would be an option.

FENZI: That would be an option. And I'm sure that we could trim fat somewhere. She should be paid a decent wage—\$10,000 a year is not much, but when you're overseas and housing is provided and you're renting your home in Washington, it's a nice income.

Q: Which is more or less gravy.

FENZI: Yes, it'll pay for trips home, it'll pay for children's trips home. We now have college expenses that you and I never could have fathomed! \$20,000 a year for private schooling. Housing: We wouldn't be living in this hous(she laughs) if we were buying it today. Can young families, with a Foreign Service salary — a single income family — buy in the neighborhood of their choice? I doubt it, really. One thing I've learned from the project is the demographics of the Foreign Service families in Washington and how they have changed, how the Foreign Service people have moved out from Sheridan Circle [prestigious Massachusetts Avenue neighborhood in town] to Georgetown, to Chevy Chase, to Bethesda.

Q: Farther out, in order to afford the housing. Do you hear much from the younger wives about salaries, allowances in relation to morale, or family problems?

FENZI: I've only talked to a few young people. One of them was Sheila Switzer on the foreign-born spouse issue. That's a whole other issue we haven't gotten into in the project.

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Another one is a tandem spouse, so their income is fine. Another young woman I talked to has an independent income. Another one I've talked to lives way out in Virginia, realizes that they have to lower their financial sights for the few years that they're here.

Q: So there is a bit of a financial squeeze.

FENZI: But when we came back to Washington, for two tours we led a more modest life. You asked me if I would recommend the Foreign Service to someone today. I don't really know today's Foreign Service. But I think from my experience, and my husband's and my children's...

Q: As a way of life.

FENZI: As a way of life, in spite of everything we endure, I can't imagin(speaking with slow emphasis) living any other way. I really can't. And, of course, the benefits. If you don't like to travel, then for heaven's sakes don't join. But the benefits are all the places we've been. I think I'll put on tape our trip to Timbuktu.

Q: Oh, by all means!

FENZI: Well, Ruthie has documented her trip, when she traveled overland as a Peace Corps volunteer.

Q: Want to say it now?

FENZI: Oh, the Timbuktu trip. Well, we went with the inspectors because — I'll make this very short — because they could not fly from Freetown to Bamako, Mali, without going through Europe in those days; this was 1965. Guido had always been control officer for the naval attach# when he came up with the plane from Monrovia. So when the inspectors needed to go to Bamako, and they wanted to visit Timbuktu, the plane came

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from Monrovia for the trip, and the attach# asked Guido if we would like to go along. It took about two seconds to say YES.

We flew up to Mali. A friend who had served in Freetown with us was supposed to arrange our passports in Mali but hadn't managed it. We had lunch, believing the passports had been taken care of, and after lunch got back out to the airport. The plane had to take off by a certain hour to land in Timbuktu before sunset because there were no lights at the airstrip. This was the naval attach#'s plane, a DC-3 from Monrovia, with the inspectors, Guido and me and some others from Monrovia who wanted to see Timbuktu.

So there we were, at the airport, the pilot waiting as long as he could. He and the co-pilot took the plane out, revved it up, and I was apoplectic, because there was our trip to Timbuktu about to take off without us. A soldier with a submachine gun was guarding the exit out to the plane. Well, fortunately there was a phone there, and it rang. Our friend picked it up and said, "Oui, ah, OUI, OUI!" and said to the guard, "It's the minister, it's all right, they can go on." So Guido and I flew out to the runway — the plane was taxiing, the door opened, we were pulled up into the plane by our hands. To this day I don't know who was on the phone. Our passports were returned to us the next day; we went to Timbuktu without them!

We arrived in Timbuktu just as the sun was a fast sinking crescent, just in time. The pilot and co-pilot had waited for us until the very last minute; if they'd waited much longer it would have been dangerous, it was dark by the time we got to the hotel. A Landrover came out and met us, took us to the hotel in great clouds of dust. There was a strip of paved road in Timbuktu about this long to the Encampment Hotel, where of course we madly bought things from all the traders who were there. We went to our rooms, and they must have been 105 degrees. We went to the dining room, and the first course had sand in it, the second course was sandy, the third course had sand, everything had sand in it. Even the melon for dessert was gritty.

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Q: No ceiling fans?

FENZI: Not a thing, the rooms were little cubicles, a little window high above. Guido and I never traveled in Africa without our sleeping bags, so we put them down on the sand, but we couldn't sleep. There was a gorgeous full moon — Walt Whitman's immense and silent moon. So we went sightseeing by moonlight, because we had to leave by 8 am the next morning.

Timbuktu is all sand, so it was like trudging along a beach at high tide. We trudged around town where people were asleep, or settled down for the night, in the streets. Little boys kept following us around and, when they discovered we had children, wanted to be pen pals with them. We couldn't get rid of them, so finally we went back and crawled into our sleeping bags. I did wonder what might crawl over me since we were on the river bank. Eventually I dozed, but was aware that some of the others had pulled their mattresses out of their rooms. The next morning we were awakened by a horrible noise. I had never heard a camel caravan before but I knew that's what it was — grunting, groaning, snorting, bellowing. We trudged through more sand to look at it. Oh, they were the saddest beasts. They had big saddle sores which the drivers had daubed with pitch. They were being prodded and watered; they didn't want to get up because they finally were resting.

We returned to the hotel and found that everybody in our group was sick, Guido and I were the only ones who weren't; everyone else was sick, including the pilot and co-pilot. Well, as it turned out, they had bacillary dysentery but Guido and I, after living in Freetown for three year(laughing) had built-in immunity. We were told, "Don't even look at the kitchen, and don't eat breakfast." So we had warm beer. We had to leave soon afterward. I've left out a lot. There was a romantic little subplot. One of the women officers just fell madly in love with one of the bachelor inspectors and we had hoped that he would ask her to get off the plane with him in Mali, but he didn't, he let her go on back to Liberia. This all took place in 1965.

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Oh, on the flight to Timbuktu, we were at about 7,000 feet and were following the course of the Niger. When you saw the little mud villages, you realized how absolutely primitive it was. Those villages have no contact with the outside world except with the Niger River and you can understand why it is called "the great brown god." The river starts in Guinea and I suppose has tributaries from Sierra Leone, it flows north to Timbuktu, which is where the river bends on the edge of the Sahara, and then it flows south and empties into the ocean at Nigeria. So it's a long, well-traveled river, and is the only major river that runs both north and south. We were flying low enough so we could see all the activity on the Niger, which wasn't much because the water was very low.

Q: Did you ever have the feeling you were looking at living geography?

FENZI: Oh, yes.

Q: And especially from a plane when you look down. Do you think of the world in different terms, now that you've seen most of it?

FENZI: I think of it mostly from 35,000 feet up, I would say! (both laugh) I felt the difference very much when we were in the pre-Sahara in Morocco, with the Tuaregs in their indigo turbans and their wonderful Ottoman features and hazel eyes. They're a handsome people. The people in Timbuktu seemed so remote in the moonlight, and the next morning we saw the little children with swarms of flies on their faces, which they were so accustomed to that they made no effort to brush them away. Just covered with flies. Well, this is the Foreign Service I cherish, the adventure and travel. A safari for our 25th wedding anniversary, we flew down to Kenya and Tanzania from Rotterdam. You can imagine going from northern Europe in February and arriving in Nairobi with the puffy white clouds that never seem to cover the sun and a riot of bougainvillea, and sighting our first giraffe. And the manor houses in Cura#ao: I got very interested in the architecture of the "landhuises." (pointing to painting) This one's now a supermarket and that one a restaurant and another one an antique store. Just delighted to have these old paintings of them,

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really. And getting to know friends who lived in a landhuis that was a careful restoration of an 18th century house.

But also, we endured a lot, we really did. Family separation, little illnesses (just constantly feeling out of sorts in Freetown and Recife), we coped with difficult superiors. We waited months and months for permanent housing, all of that. But it's a little bit like labor pains — (laughing) you forget about it. You remember the good part. So, yes, I would recommend it. I don't know if today's young wife necessarily has the same attitude we had. But if she's happier as a CLO or as a tandem couple or as a visa clerk or as a telephone operator in the embassy, okay, it's her life. But my feeling was that, while I was making a contribution to the embassy in Trinidad as a CLO, that was the post where I made the fewest host country friends and had the least interest in the local culture. Some of that was due to my horrible eyesight at that time. I couldn't see well enough to drive a route I hadn't memorized! But part of it was that with an absorbing job, there weren't many free hours left for the casual Trinidadian contacts that you and I made at posts in the past.

Q: But even for a wife or spouse today who would be working part- or full-time, there still is all the rest that you've mentioned.

FENZI: I believe in moving with the times, and I think it helps to have children in their 30s to know how 30-year-olds are thinking today. The people who come into the Service now are in their 30s and they are taking with them the attitudes my children have.

Q: New attitudes.

FENZI: New and different attitudes. And we can lament for the old service but there is something to be said for the new service, I believe, if it gives a woman a sense of identity. I'm not sure that there are — and I may be wrong — a lot of young wives who would do the total support role we did before 1972 and be happy.

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Q: But don't you feel that most of them have their own view of their own identity, whether it's working or community working?

FENZI: Yes, they seem to, they seem to. I guess my closest contact with young Foreign Service wives these days is the Brazil group and they seem to have a great sense of identity.

Q: That they feel comfortable with?

FENZI: Yes. But to compare Mrs. John Campbell White's life in the 1920s with that of the youngest woman I've interviewed — I call her mlittle “state-of-the-art spouse”, Patty Murphy, a tandem spouse in 1990 — there's a great, great deal of difference in their attitudes toward the Service. I think perhaps everybody involved in the project should read the two transcripts to sethe great difference in their lives as Foreign Service wives. (Weiss would like to read them, she says.) Maybe you should take one with you right now!

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Addendum - May 1992

In the interview four years ago I neglected to mention on tape the two principal reasons for organizing the oral history project. First was to add a voice to the chorus advocating recognition and compensation for the Foreign Service spouse. Second, there was no history of Foreign Service wives and their relationship to the Service. When I went to the Library of Congress in 1986 to retrieve a printout of the publications on diplomatic wives, the results were meager. I also decided at that time that the public's perception of diplomatic wives needed updating!

One of the titles on the printout was a one act play — a copy is now in our file — called “The Diplomatic Tea,” written by the Casper, Wyoming chapter of the DAR, printed by Oil City Press in 1938. It was an imaginary tea party — well, not entirely imaginary, some

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of the script was taken from actual writings of Abigail Adams and other colonial women. Abigail Adams discusses her presentation at the Court of St. James and describes the “modest” gown she wore. There is a fortune teller who predicts the fate of the husbands of some of the ladies at the tea, etc.

There were a number of cookbooks on the Library list. Also, there were the AAFSW 1985 “Report on the Role of the Spouse in the Foreign Service”; a number of books written by foreign diplomatic wives; at least one book by a man, and a number of vanity press publications of personal memoirs. Nothing more. It was apparent that, two hundred years after the fact, Abigail and Louisa Adams' correspondence, journals, etc., remained the best documentation we had of the life of the American diplomatic spouse.

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Spouse: Guido Cammillo Fenzi Spouse's Position: Economic Officer, Principal Officer
Status: Spouse of FSO, Retired Date entered Service: January 1956 Left Service: October 1985

Posts:

1956-1958 Washington, DC 1958-1960 Rotterdam, The Netherlands
1960-1962 Washington, DC 1962-1965 Freetown, Sierra Leone 1965-1969 Rabat, Morocco
1965-69 1969-1973 Curaçao, Netherlands Antilles 1973-1976 Rotterdam, The Netherlands
1976-1979 Washington, DC 1979-1982 Recife, Brazil 1983 Washington, DC 1983-1985 Port of Spain, Trinidad 1985 Washington, DC (Ret.)

Date/place of marriage: San Rafael, Calif., December 16, 1950

Children:

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Ruth Redfield Fenzi Reeder, American School of Tangier; Bradford Junior College, Mass.; California College of Arts and Crafts, Oakland; Peace Corps Volunteer in Atakpamé, Togo; graphic designer, amateur archaeologist; married to Tom Reeder, Jr., attorney with Paul, Hastings, Janofsky and Walker in Washington, DC

Cammillo Franceschi Fenzi, Deerfield Academy, Mass.; Stanford University, Calif. BS, MS; corporate strategist for Hewlett-Packard, Palo Alto, Calif.

Date/place of birth: Iowa, May 21, 1927

Schools:Tucson High School (now Tucson Magnet School), Tucson, Ariz

UC Berkeley, BA 1950; Universities of Arizona and Hawaii

Profession:FS spouse, Author/Publisher, Director, FSSOH, Inc.

Positions held in Washington and at post (Volunteer if not marked Pd.):

Washington, DC: 1961-62 - Editor, AAFSW Newsletter; 1978 -79 - Placement Counselor, Volunteer Clearinghouse of the District of Columbia); 1985 - to present - Director, Foreign Service Spouse Oral History, Inc.; co-author Married to the Foreign Service, published in 1994 by Macmillan under their Twayne imprint (Pd.).

Rotterdam 1959 - As President of American Netherlands Club of Rotterdam (ANCOR), initiated establishment of the American International School of Rotterdam, now in operation for 32 years; 1973-76 - Revitalizerental library for ANCOR. Wrote series of articles for "Holland Herald", English language magazine in The Netherlands and KLM in-flight magazine (Pd.).Curaçao, 1969 - 73;- wrote "This Is the Way We Cook! - Recipes from Outstanding Cooks of the Netherlands Antilles"; book is in 7th printing (Pd.); Staff writer for Holiday publications and R.J. Dovale Advertising (Pd.); Assisted with Curaçao Book Club, American community library.

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Recife 1979 - 82 - As spouse of Principal Officer, managed official residence and staff; housed Recife Book Club rental library (English) in residence; Wrote "This Is the Way We Cook - Recipes of Brazil's Northeast." (Pd.).

Port of Spain 1983-85 - Community Liaison Officer, American Embassy (Pd.); Member of Port of Spain literary group.

Honors: Ford Foundation grant (unable to take advantage of it because of two small children)